

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

WE left Hester going up the stairs to her bedroom at eleven o'clock at night, her work in one hand and her candle in the other, when Mrs. Archer suddenly rushed out upon the landing.

"Oh! Miss Halliwell, where's Sarah?" she exclaimed, in nervous excitement. "In mercy let her run for a doctor."

"What is the matter?" asked Hester. "Who is ill?"

"Oh, come and see! It is of no use attempting concealment now." And seizing Hester's arm, she hurried her through the drawing-room. Miss Graves was getting up from the sofa, where she had retired to rest, and Hester put down her work, and went, with her candle, into the bedroom. On the bed, his head raised high upon a pillow, lay a gentleman, his eyes closed and his face still and white, whilst drops of blood were slowly issuing from his mouth.

"Is he dead?" uttered Hester, in the first shock of surprise.

"Where's Sarah? where's Sarah?" was all the answer of Mrs. Archer. "We *must* have a doctor."

"Sarah is in bed. I will go up and call her."

"In bed! then I'll go for one myself." And, throwing on a shawl and bonnet, Mrs. Archer darted down the stairs, but stopped ere she reached the bottom, and looked up at Hester, who was lighting her. "The nearest surgeon—where?"

"About ten doors higher up the road. You'll see the lamp over the door."

"Ah, yes, I forgot;" and she flew on. Hester followed, for she remembered that the key of the gate was hanging up in the kitchen, and Mrs. Archer could not get out without it. Then she called up Sarah, and went back to the room.

"Who is this gentleman?" she whispered to Miss Graves.

"Mr. Archer, my sister's husband," was the reply ; and, just then, the invalid opened his eyes and looked at them.

Never will Hester forget that moment. The expression of those eyes flashed on the chords of her memory like a ray of light, and gradually she recognised the features, though they were altered, worn, and wasted. Archer? Archer? Yes, although the name had never struck her before as in connection with *him*, there could be no doubt about it. She was gazing on him who had been so dear to her in early life—too dear, for the ending that came.

"He is a clergyman—the Reverend George Archer?" she whispered to Miss Graves.

"Yes. How did you know?"

Poor Hester did not answer. Those old days were coming back to her, as in a dream. The happy home at Seaford, their engagement, the few weeks of transient bliss that followed, the bright vision of the Lady Georgina, and then the wretched parting. And now thus to meet him! Lying on a bed in her own house, and not long for this world!

His wife returned with the doctor. He said the case was not so serious as it appeared. That the blood came from a small vessel ruptured on the chest, not the lungs. Hester remained with Mrs. Archer that night. Sarah made a fire in the drawing-room, and they sat by it while he dozed. Mrs. Archer spoke of her troubles, and sobbed bitterly.

"Has he been long here?" inquired Hester, wondering how in the world he had got in.

"It was the day your pupils were going away," replied Mrs. Archer. "I was standing at the window, watching the carriage which had come to fetch some of them, when I saw my husband coming down the road, evidently looking out for the house. He appeared ill and thin, walked as if his strength were gone, but I knew him, and flew down to the gate, which was open as well as the house-door. As it happened, no one was in the hall when we came upstairs ; I heard Sarah's voice on the upper flight ; she was bringing down luggage, but she did not see us."

"But you ought to have told me," urged Hester.

"I know that," she rejoined ; "and such a thing as taking him in, clandestinely, never entered my thoughts. It arose with circumstances. Look at our position : you positively refused to receive a gentleman here ; but he had come, and how were we to remove to other lodgings, owing you what we do, destitute of means, almost destitute of food? So there he lay, ill, on that bed. Reproach me as much as you will, Miss Halliwell ; turn us into the road, if you must do so : it seems that little can add to my trouble and perplexity now. There have been moments lately when I have not known how to refrain from—from—running away—and——"

"And what?" asked Hester.

"Why, I have thought the calm bed of a river would be to me as rest after toil."

"Goodness me, Mrs. Archer!" uttered Hester, half in surprise, half in a shock of indignation; "a Christian must never use such language as that, while there's a Heaven to supplicate for refuge. All who ask for strength *to bear*, find it there."

"I have had no happiness in my married life," she went on to say. "It is—let me see—six years since, now. Mr. Archer was a working curate in London: a weary life he led of it in that large parish of poor people. Soon after we married his health began to fail; he used to seem dispirited, and the duties were too heavy for him. I took it into my head that some sorrow was upon him; that he had never really loved me. I don't know. Once I taxed him with it, with both, but he seemed surprised, said he thought he had been always kind, as indeed he had, and I let the idea drop. His health grew worse, change of scene and air were essential to him, and he received an appointment as foreign chaplain—army chaplain I think it was—and went out with that Spanish Legion. Later, I and my sister lost our money. My brother, with whom it was placed, failed, and we were deprived of our income. Latterly we have been living by—it is of no use to mince the matter—by pledging things, and now my husband has come home without his pay, and cannot get the arrears which are due to him. He says they have all been put off, officers and soldiers—not one of them has received a farthing. The Spanish government ought to be prosecuted."

There was a pretty state of things! That sick clergyman in the house, and all three of them without means. Lucy was up in arms when told the news.

"They must go out of the house; they must, Hester; even if we pay for lodgings for them. If he dies, and has to be buried from here, it will be the ruin of the school. Dear—dear! to think of its being George Archer! How things do come about in this world!"

Mrs. Archer wrote to her brother, doubting, however, his ability to assist them, but at the end of a week there came a ten-pound note. Mr. Archer was better then.

"Now I will not take any of it," Hester said to Mrs. Archer. "You shall keep it to start afresh with in new lodgings, but you must leave these."

That same afternoon, Mrs. Archer and her sister went out to seek some, and Hester, according to their request, took her work and went to sit with Mr. Archer.

He was sitting up in the easy-chair, the one which had been Mrs. Halliwell's, and the Major's before her. Many a time had she sat in it when talking to George Archer in the old days. A queerish sort of feeling came over Hester as she took her place opposite to him, for it was the first time they had been alone together; but she made herself busy with her sewing.

They conversed on indifferent subjects—the weather, his medicine, and so on ; when all at once he wheeled that chair closer to Hester's, and spoke in low, deep tones :

"Hester, have you ever forgiven me?"

"Indeed yes ; long ago."

"Then it is more than I have done by myself," he groaned.
"But I was rightly served."

Hester looked up at him, and then down at her work again.

"You heard, perhaps, how she jilted me. Hester, as true as that you are sitting there, working, she drew me on ; drew me on from the first, to flirt with and admire her!"

"You are speaking of ——" Hester could not bring out the word.

"*Her*. Lady Georgina. Who else? And when she saw, as I know she did see, to what a passionate height my love was reaching, she fooled me more and more. I did not see my folly at the time ; I was too infatuated to do so ; but I have cursed it ever since, as I daresay you have."

"Hush ! hush !" interrupted Hester.

"And when it was betrayed to the Earl, and he drove me away, to part with me as she did, without a sigh, without a regret," he went on, not deigning to notice the interruption. "Hester, you were *well* avenged."

"Do not excite yourself, Mr. Archer."

"How I got over those first few weeks I don't know, and shudder to remember. Then came her marriage : I read it in the papers. Heartless, wicked girl ! And she had solemnly protested to me she did not care for Mr. Caudour. Well ! troubles and mad grief do come to an end ; and so, thank God ! does life."

"What was your career afterwards ?"

"My career for a time was perfect idleness. I could do nothing. Remorse for my wild infatuation had taken heavy hold upon me, and a great amount of misery was mixed up with it. Then, when I came to myself a little, I sought employment, and obtained the curacy of a parish in London, where the pay was little and the work incessant. Next, I married : not with the feelings I should have married *you*, Hester, even then : but the lady had money, a good income, and I had need of many luxuries, for my health was failing—or necessities, call them which you will—which my stipend would not obtain. I grew worse. I think, if I had remained in London, I should have died there, and I went out to Spain."

"From whence you have now returned ?"

"Yes. Penniless. Done out of the money coming to me. And now the sooner I die the better, for I am only a burden to others. I am closing a life rendered useless by my own infatuated folly : my talents have been buried in a napkin, my heart turned to gall and wormwood. Oh, Hester ! again I say it, you are richly avenged."

"Have you ever met since?"

"Georgina Seaford? Never. Her husband is Lord Caudour now. I saw the old baron's death in a stray newspaper that came out to Spain."

"I have always felt thankful for one thing," said Hester: "that she did not know of our engagement. And perhaps that may offer some slight excuse for her conduct."

"She did know of it," said Mr. Archer, quickly.

Hester looked up, pained and surprised, but still in doubt. "How could she have known of it?" she breathed.

"From me. Oh, yes, I was infatuated all through the piece, and I told her that. I also told her when it was broken off. Don't execrate me, Hester. I have done nothing but execrate myself ever since. Excuse for her conduct there was none: she was a vain, heartless girl."

Hester fell into a reverie, from which she was awakened by hearing the garden gate open, and she looked from the window. "Here come your wife and Miss Graves," she said. "How soon they are in again!"

"Hester," he murmured, in an impassioned tone, seizing her hand as she was about to pass him, intending to open the drawing-room door to welcome them, for in all the little courtesies of life Hester, like her mother, was prompt, "say you forgive me."

She leaned down, and spoke soothingly. "George, believe me, I have perfectly forgiven you: I forgave you long ago. That the trial to me was one of length and bitterness it would be affectation to deny, but I have outlived it. Let me go. They are coming up the stairs."

He pressed her hand between both of his, and then kissed it as fervently as he had kissed her own lips that night, years, years before, when they were walking home, after church, behind her mother and Lucy. She drew it hastily from him, for they were already in the drawing-room, and a feeling, long buried, very like that forgotten *love*, cast a momentary sunshine on her heart: and then she laughed at herself for being a great simpleton.

They had found lodgings and they all moved into them the following day. Hester could not but feel relieved when they had left the house.

It happened the following spring, it was in May, Hester had business at the house of one of their pupils, whose father lived in Upper Brook Street. When close to it she found herself in the midst of a string of carriages, inside which were ladies in full evening dress, though it was only one o'clock in the day. Full of surprise, she asked a policeman what it meant.

"The Queen's drawing-room."

To be sure. She wondered, then, she had not thought of it for herself. It happened to be the first time she had ever seen the sight, and she stood gazing at the rich dresses, the snow-white feathers, and

the lovely, lovely faces. The carriages had been stationary, but now there was a move, and then they were stationary again. More beautiful than any gone before was the inmate of the chariot now opposite to Hester—a fair, elegant woman, with a bright smile and haughty eye. Surely she knew the features! She did, alas for her! Though she had never seen them since they stepped, with their sinful fascinations, between her and her betrothed husband, Hester felt sure that they were those of Georgina Seaford.

"Do you know who this lady is?" she whispered to her friend, the policeman.

He looked at the lady, at the coronet on the carriage, at the white coats and crimson velvet breeches of the servants. "I think," he answered, "it is the Lady Caudour."

Time had passed lightly over her: her countenance was as smooth, as smiling, as free from care as it had been in her girlhood. Hester was struggling through life with a lonely heart, and *he* was dying in his obscure lodgings, after a short career of regret and sorrow; whilst she who had caused all, who had sacrificed them both to her selfish vanity, seemed to be revelling in all the good that could make existence happy.

In her deep and bitter thoughts, Hester had unconsciously fixed her gaze too long and earnestly on that lovely face. It attracted the attention of Lady Caudour, and she returned it. A recollection seemed to flash across her, and she leaned towards Hester and spoke. The chariot was close to the pavement, the policeman had moved on, and not a single spectator had halted just at that spot.

"I think I have some remembrance of your countenance," she said, in a distant, aristocratic, but essentially civil tone. "You are—or were—Miss Halliwell."

The colour flushed over Hester's face; she was "taken to," as the saying runs. She bowed in reply.

"You used to come to the castle at Seaford to teach my sister, Lady Ellen."

"I hope Lady Ellen is well," stammered Hester, feeling as awkward as she did the first day she ever went there, and not knowing what to say.

"Quite well. She will soon be no longer Lady Ellen Seaford; she marries the Earl of Thetford at the close of the season. Are you Miss Halliwell still, may I ask?"

"Still Miss Halliwell."

The carriage moved on a step, and Hester, in her sense of politeness, moved on with it.

"Are you still at Seaford? Who is the rector there now?"

"Not Mr. Archer," returned Hester, wondering what courage prompted her to say it. "But we are no longer living at Seaford."

"Mr. Archer"—in the most perfectly indifferent tone—"I did not know he was ever appointed there."

"I said he was not, madam," was Hester's rejoinder. "He marred his own prospects in early life—or they were marred for him—and he is now dying. Dying, my Lady Caudour, in want and obscurity."

"How very sad!" was Lady Caudour's reply, delivered with high-bred indifference. "I am sorry for him. Is Mrs. Halliwell alive still?"

Before Hester could reply the carriage advanced again, and the Lady Caudour bowed her stately head by way of farewell, not waiting for the answer. Hester looked after her—at the bedizened servants, the luxurious carriage, the magnificent dress and jewels of its mistress, at her careless ease, her conscious vanity as of old, at all the signs of wealth and luxury, of the pomp and pride of life. Her heart was very sad just then. "Oh, Father! Father!" she wailed forth in the anguish of the retrospect pressing sharply upon her: "Thy blessings appear to be dealt out with an unequal hand. Nevertheless, may we be enabled ever to say, Thy will be done; for Thy ways are not as our ways, and Thou knowest what is best for us!"

The Archers did not get on very well. Hester often sent them a substantial plate of something, under pretence of tempting his appetite; slices of roast beef, or a tureen of nourishing broth with the meat in. Lucy would say they could not afford it, and Sarah exclaimed loudly against "cooking for other people;" but they were fellow-creatures, and in need, and *he was George Archer!* That summer put an end to his weary life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCHOOL AND THE HANDKERCHIEFS.

JUST about this time a piece of good fortune befel Mrs. Goring. Her godmother, from whom she had never had the slightest expectations, died, and left her an annuity of £300 for her life. It was, however, to cease then. Dr. Goring was getting on famously, was much liked in Middlebury, and Mary was very happy.

Hester had used to say that no one need envy her, or any other schoolmistress. What with the wearing labour of instructing so many hours daily, the din of the school-room, the crosses and vexations sure to arise with the pupils or their parents, and the worry sometimes caused by the teachers, it was anything but an easy life. A troublesome event arose with one of their teachers, a Miss Powis. But, with the reader's permission, it may be as well to give the account of it in Hester's own words. I am sure she can relate it a great deal better than I can. Therefore, for the next few pages, please to note that it is Miss Halliwell speaking: not the author.

Miss Powis was recommended to us as being particularly likely to

suit. A younger sister of hers was at our school as day-scholar, the parents living near in a small cottage. They had moved in a very respectable sphere of life, but had been unfortunate, and the father had obtained some employment in the City, to and from which he walked morning and evening. Miss Powis was about two-and-twenty, an accomplished, handsome girl, but somewhat wild and random, leading the pupils into mischief, instead of keeping them out of it. Though I cannot but say I liked her, for she had a kind heart, and was ever ready to do a good turn for anyone.

The second half-year she was with us, soon after the re-assembling of the pupils subsequent to the midsummer vacation, the fair took place as usual. It was a great nuisance, this fair, every summer, the noise of the drums and fifes of the show-people reaching even into our school-room, to our annoyance and the school's delight, obliging us to sit with the windows closed. No good was ever done whilst that fair lasted; lessons were not learnt, and copies were blotted; the children's attention being all given to those sounds in the fields at the back.

Well, it was one evening at fair time: Lucy had gone to bed with a sick headache, and a lady unexpectedly dropped in to tea, having come down by one of the city omnibuses. Of course I could not go out and leave her, so I was obliged to send Miss Powis alone with the children for their evening walk. "Go up the Plover Road, opposite," I said to her, when they were ready, "as far as Ringfence field, which will be a quiet, pleasant, rural walk; but be sure don't go within sight or hearing of that disreputable fair."

"Oh, no," she replied, "not for the world;" and away they filed out at the gate.

Now what did that Miss Powis do? As soon as they were beyond view of the house, she turned round—for she was walking first, in her place, mine and Lucy's being at the rear—and said, coming to a standstill: "Girls, suppose we go down Dogfight Lane" (a narrow place, leading to the fair: dirty cottages on one side, trees and a ditch on the other) "just a little way, and have a peep, from the distance, at the pictures outside the shows? Can you all undertake to keep the secret, indoors? I'm sure there's no harm looking at shows half a mile off: and in that Plover Road we shan't see a soul but the old cow in Ringfence field, and our own shadows." Of course the schoolgirls would not have been schoolgirls had they said "No" to any mischief where a teacher led, and they went half frantic with delight, vowing, one and all, that the tortures of the Inquisition should not wring the secret from them—the said tortures having been the subject of their morning's theme.

Half way down Dogfight Lane, they came in view of the still-distant shows, and could have halted there and admired the painted scenes. But this did not satisfy them—one bite out of an apple rarely does, anyone—and on they went, down the lane, and burs.

right into the confusion of the fair. They visited the selling-stalls first, where some bought gingerbread; some unripe plums and rotten cherries; some—how humiliated I felt when I heard of it!—raffled for cakes, and shot at pincushions; some drank bottles of trash and fizz, called ginger-beer; and some bought fortune-telling cards; indeed, it is impossible to say what they did not buy. Then they went round to the shows to gaze at the pictures. Ugly booths decorated with play-acting scenery; dandy men in tight-fitting white garments, with red-paint eyebrows; harlequins turning summersaults, and laughing at their own coarse jokes; young women, in a meretricious costume of glazed calico and spangles, reaching no lower than their knees, who walked about with their arms a-kimbo, and waltzed with the harlequins! That a ladies' boarding-school should have been seen in front of anything so low-lived and demoralising!

It was seven o'clock, and the performances were about to commence, drums were beating, fifes were piping, the companies were dancing, and the cries "Walk-up, ladies and gentlemen, we are just going to begin," were echoing above the din. The young ladies stood looking on at all this, longing to see further; for if the outside was so attractive, what must the inside be? And—well, I must not reflect too harshly upon them: it is hard, especially for the young and light-hearted, to resist temptation. They went in—they really did: some into the "wax-work," and the rest into this theatre affair where the harlequins were. When they came to club their money together, it was found to be deficient, but the showmen took them for what they could muster. Very considerate of them! All particulars came out to me afterwards—or how could I have related this?—and I was ready to go out of my mind with vexation. But it was not their fault, it was Miss Powis's; and I have scarcely, I fear, excused her in my heart for her imprudence that night. But I do believe there is no act of deliberate disobedience but brings its own punishment, sooner or later. I have remarked it many times in the course of my life; and this did, with her.

Meanwhile, when my visitor departed, and I had been upstairs to see if Lucy wanted anything, I sat on at the parlour window, beginning to think the young ladies late, but concluding that the beauty of the summer's night made them linger, when Sarah came in, and said Mrs. Nash wanted me.

Mrs. Nash was the lodger now. A lady had taken the apartments after the departure of the Archers, and had remained five months with us, and now Mrs. Nash had succeeded her. She was a very grand lady in purse and dress. Her husband had made a mint of money at something in London, a retail shop we heard, but lately he had given it up, and bought mines, and they had recently taken a villa in our neighbourhood. Mr. Nash was in Cornwall, and his wife had engaged our drawing-room and bedroom for a month, that

she might be on the spot to superintend the fitting-up of her new house. She was certainly very far removed from a gentlewoman, and spoke very ungrammatically. So I went upstairs when Sarah said Mrs. Nash wanted to see me.

"Have the goodness to shut the door behind you," she said, when I entered, without rising from her own seat, which I thought not very polite. She always spoke as if we were her inferiors, though, in birth and education—but that has nothing to do with the matter just now.

"I thought you might have liked the door open this warm evening," I civilly answered, turning back to close it.

"So I might, for it's close enough in this room," she rejoined. "But I've something to say that I don't want all the world to hear. Won't you sit down?"

I drew a chair forward, and sat down near her, waiting for her to continue.

"That servant of yours," she abruptly began—"I want to ask a few questions about her. Is she honest?"

"Honest? Sarah?" For I was too much surprised to say more.

"The question's plain enough," repeated Mrs. Nash, in an impatient tone. "Have you never had no cause to doubt her honesty?"

"She is as honest as the day," I replied warmly. "She has been with us two years, and is above suspicion. I could trust the girl with untold gold."

"It's very odd," continued Mrs. Nash. "It was this day week—this is Friday, isn't it?—I came in from the Willa, tired to death; for I had been standing over them painters and paperers, and telling 'em a bit of my mind about their laziness. I was as hungry as a hunter, besides, and after I had took off my things, I went down to the kitchen to see if Sarah was getting forward with my dinner. She had the steak on the fire, and I went up and looked at the potatoes, for fear she should be doing 'em too much, for young ones is good for nothing when they are soft. That I had my pocket-handkerchief in my hand then I'll swear to, for I lifted the lid of the saucepan with it, and Sarah saw me, but when I got back to the drawing-room here, it was gone."

"You may have put it on the kitchen table and forgotten it," I replied.

"That's just my own opinion, that I did leave it there. I came straight upstairs, and as I was coming in at this door, I put my hand in my pocket for my handkerchief, for the current of air had made me sneeze, but no handkerchief was there. That teacher of yours was standing here, waiting for me: you had sent her up with a book. But she couldn't have touched it."

"Miss Powis? Oh, dear, no."

"Don't I say she couldn't? She was at the end there, by the

window, and I missed my handkerchief coming in at the door. I took the book from her, and she went down, and I after her."

"Did you go back to the kitchen? Did you ask Sarah?" I inquired.

"I went back at once, I tell you, following on Miss Powis's steps, and of course I asked Sarah; and what first raised my suspicions against her was her saying she saw me put the handkerchief in my pocket as I left the kitchen. Now this could not have been the case, for if I had put it in my pocket at the bottom of the stairs, there it would have been when I got to the top, as I told her, but she was as obstinate as a mule over it, and persisted, to my face, that I had put it in."

"I hope you will find it," I said. "It cannot be lost."

"I sha'n't find it now," she answered. "But it was a new handkerchief of fine cambric. I gave a great deal for it."

"Could you have intended to put it in your pocket, and let it slip beside, on to the ground?" I suggested.

"I don't let things slip beside my pocket," she tartly answered; "but, if I had, there it would have been, in the hall or on the stairs. Nobody had been there to pick it up in that minute, and both your teacher and myself can certify that it was not there. No! that servant has it."

"Indeed she has not, Mrs. Nash; I will be answerable for her. But why did you not tell me this at the time?"

"The notion came into my mind that I'd make no fuss, but lay a trap for Sarah. So I have left handkerchiefs about these rooms since, and other things. I put a brooch in a corner of the floor on Monday, and last night I clapped a sixpence under the hearth-rug, knowing she took it up every morning to shake."

"And the results," I cried, feeling that I should blush to lay such "traps" for anyone.

"I like my rights," responded Mrs. Nash, "and nobody will stand up in defence of their own stouter than I will; but to accuse a person without reason, isn't in my nature. So I am free to confess that the baits I have laid about have been left untouched. The girl found and brought me the brooch, saying she supposed it had fallen from my dress; and this morning the sixpence was laid on the mantelpiece."

"Yes, Sarah is strictly honest," I affirmed, "and wherever the handkerchief can have gone, she has not got it. Will you allow me to mention it to her?"

"Oh, yes, if you like. And I'm sure, if between you my property can be brought to light, I shall be glad, and rejoice over it."

"Fidgety, pompous old cat," uttered Sarah, irreverently, when I went down and spoke to her. "She put the handkerchief into her pocket as she left the kitchen; I saw her a-cramming of it in with these two blessed eyes. She's been and mislaid it somewhere; in

her bedroom, I'll be bound, for the things lie about there at sixes and sevens. She'll find it, ma'am, when she's not looking for it, never fear."

"Sarah, what in the world can have become of the young ladies?"

"The young ladies!" echoed Sarah, "aren't they come in?" For the girl had been on an errand for Mrs. Nash, and did not know to the contrary.

"Indeed they are not."

"I'm sure I thought nothing but what they were in, and in bed. Why, ma'am, it's twenty minutes past nine!"

"Where can they be? What is Miss Powis thinking about?"

"There's that noise again!" uttered Sarah, banging down her kitchen window as the sound of the drums and trumpets broke suddenly from the fair. "They are letting the folks out of the shows."

"Now! This is early to give over."

"Give over! Law bless you, ma'am! There's another repetition of the performance about to begin now: them tambourines and horns is to 'tice folks up. It won't be over till just upon eleven o'clock; as you'd know if you slept back."

It may have been ten minutes after that when we heard the side door open stealthily, and the young ladies come creeping in. I sprang towards them.

"What has been the matter? Where have you been?" I reiterated.

"We missed our way, and walked too far," answered a voice from amongst them, though whose it was I did not recognise then, and no one will own to it since.

"Very careless indeed, Miss Powis," I uttered; "very wrong. The young ladies must be tired to death, walking all this time, especially the little ones."

No one gave me any reply, and they all made for the staircase and bounded up it, Miss Powis after them, certainly not as if they were tired, more as if they wanted to get out of my sight. Young legs are indeed elastic, I thought to myself, little dreaming that those same legs had been at rest for the last two or three hours, the knees cramped between hard benches, and the feet buried in sawdust.

Several days passed on, and nothing occurred to arouse my suspicions about this fair escapade. On the Wednesday afternoon, our half-holiday, Mrs. Nash, in a fit of condescension, sent down an invitation for me, my sister, and Miss Powis to drink tea with her. As we could not all leave the young ladies, and we thought it might appear selfish if we went up ourselves and excluded Miss Powis (though she knew nothing of the invitation), Lucy said she would be the one to remain with the children.

A very good cup of tea she gave us, and Mrs. Nash entertained us with visions of her future greatness. The handsome fittings-up

of her new villa, the servants they intended to keep, the new open carriage about to be purchased, and the extensive wardrobe she both had and meant to have. "What do you think I gave for this?" she said, suddenly holding out her pocket-handkerchief. "Isn't it lovely, and I've a dozen of them."

"It is indeed a beautiful handkerchief," I said, examining its fine embroidery, and its trimming of broad Valenciennes lace. "It is unfit for common use."

"Yes, it is," answered Mrs. Nash. "But I used it at the horticultural show yesterday, so thought I'd finish it up to-day. I gave eight-and-twenty shilling for that, at Swan and Edgar's, without the lace."

After tea, we took out our work. I proceeded to darn a lace collar, which was beginning to drop into holes, and Miss Powis to go on with her bead purse. Mrs. Nash said she could afford to put work out, and never did any. It happened that this collar had belonged to my mother, and we were comparing its lace, which was old point, with the Valenciennes round the handkerchief, when the gate bell rang, and Sarah came up and said a lady wanted me. So I laid my collar on the table, and went down to the parlour.

It was Mrs. Watkinson, who had come to pay the last quarter's bill for her niece's schooling. She sat talking some little time, and when she left I returned upstairs again, meeting on my way Miss Powis, who was running down them.

"I have worked up all my beads," she remarked to me in passing, "and am going to fetch some more." Making some trifling answer, I entered the drawing-room. Mrs. Nash was standing at the window, watching two omnibuses which were galloping past.

"How them omnibuses do race, one against another!" she exclaimed. "If I was a magistrate, I'd have every omnibus-driver in London before me; and put 'em into gaol in a body, endangering people's lives as they do! As soon as I have a carriage of my own, I sha'n't want to trouble 'em much, thank the stars."

I stood for a moment by her side, looking at the clouds of dust which the flying omnibuses raised behind them, and Mrs. Nash returned to her seat.

"Where's my handkerchief gone?" she suddenly exclaimed.

I looked round. She was standing by the table, turning about all that was lying upon it, newspapers, my work, Miss Powis's work-box, and other things. No handkerchief was there; and then she looked about the room. "Where can it be?"

"Are you speaking of the handkerchief you had in use?" I asked.

"Yes, I am. It was on the table by me, by your work, I'm sure of that. That makes two gone. What an odd thing."

I quite laughed at her. "It cannot be gone," I said; "it is impossible."

"Well, where is it then? It can't have sunk through the floor."

That was clear. "Perhaps you have left it in the bedroom," I suggested.

"I have not been in the bedroom," returned Mrs. Nash, angrily. "I have never stirred from my seat since tea, till I got up to look at them wicked omnibuses. As I turned from the window I put my hand in my pocket for my handkerchief and couldn't find it; then I remembered I had left it on the table, and I looked, and it wasn't there, and it wasn't on my chair, and it isn't anywhere—as you see, Miss Halliwell. One would say you had fairies in the house."

Just then Miss Powis returned. "What can I have done with my paper of beads?" she exclaimed, going up to her workbox and examining its contents. "Why here they are, after all! How could I have overlooked them?"

"I have lost something worse than beads," interposed Mrs. Nash. "My beautiful handkerchief. It's spirited away somewhere."

Miss Powis laughed. "It was lying on the table for ever so long," she said to Mrs. Nash. "You took it up and pressed it to your mouth, saying one of your lips was sore, and it was probably the salt from the shrimps you had taken at tea. After that, I think you put it in your pocket."

"Are you sure it is not in your pocket now?" I eagerly inquired of Mrs. Nash.

"Goodness save us; do you think I should say I hadn't the handkerchief if I had?" returned Mrs. Nash in a passion. "Look for yourselves." She whipped up her gown as she spoke—a handsome green satin one, which she frequently wore—and displayed a white jean pocket resting on a corded petticoat. Rapidly emptying her pocket of its contents, she turned it inside out.

It certainly was not in her pocket, and she proceeded to shake her petticoats as if she were shaking for a wager. "It's not about me; I wish it was. Do you think either of you ladies can have put it into your pockets by mistake?"

"It is impossible that I can have done so," I answered; "because I was not in the room."

"And equally impossible for me," added Miss Powis; "for I was not on that side of the table, and could only have taken it by purposely reaching over for it." Nevertheless we both, following the example of Mrs. Nash, proceeded to turn out our pockets. No signs of the handkerchief.

A complete hunt ensued. I begged Mrs. Nash to sit still, called up Sarah, and we proceeded to the search. Mrs. Nash's bedroom was also submitted to the ordeal, but she protested that if found there, it must have flown through the keyhole. She offered the keys of her drawers, and of the cupboard—if we liked to look, she said—and was evidently very much put out, and as much puzzled

as we were. Later in the evening, Miss Powis retired to take the children to bed, and Lucy came in.

"Now what is your opinion of this little bit of mystery?" asked Mrs. Nash, looking at me.

"I cannot give one," I said; "I am unable to fathom it. It is to me perfectly unaccountable."

"Your suspicions don't yet point to the thief?"

"The thief! Oh, Mrs. Nash, pray do not distress me by talking in that way. The handkerchief will come to light, it *must* come to light: I assure you Sarah is no thief."

"Oh, I don't suspect Sarah now," returned the lady. "It's a moral impossibility that she could have had anything to do with the business this evening, and I am sorry to have accused her to you before. You are on the wrong scent, Miss Halliwell."

I felt my face flush all over. Did she suspect ME?

"Ah, I see, light is dawning upon you," she added.

"Indeed, indeed it is not," I retorted, warmly. "We have no thief in this house: we never have had one yet."

"Well, you are certainly as unsuspicious as a child," she said. "Who has it—has both—but Miss Powis?"

"Miss Powis!" I and Lucy uttered together. "Impossible!"

"We none of us have it—have we? the room has not got it—has it? it can't have vanished into the earth or soared up to the skies, and I suppose none of us ate it. Then who can have it but Miss Powis? The thing is as plain as a pikestaff. What made her rush out of the room, on a sudden, pretending to go for her beads, when they were here all the while?"

"Miss Powis is quite a gentlewoman; the family are very respectable, only reduced," broke in Lucy, indignantly. "She would be no more capable of it than we should be."

"Oh, bother to family gentility," retorted Mrs. Nash; "that doesn't fill young girls' pockets with pocket-money. I suppose she was hard up, and thought my handkerchiefs would help her to some."

I felt too vexed to speak. Lucy began a warm reply, but was interrupted by Mrs. Nash.

"I should like to know how she disposed of the first: I'll stop her disposing of the last, for I'll have her up before the Lord Mayor to-morrow morning. This comes of her going gallivanting, as she did, to those shows at the fair."

"What a dreadful calumny!" uttered Lucy.

"She didn't only go herself, but she took all the school," coolly persisted Mrs. Nash, "and they never arrived home till half-past nine at night. You two ladies, for school-mistresses, are rather innocent to what's going on around you."

A sharp recollection, bringing its own pain, flashed across me of the night when the young ladies terrified me by remaining out so

late. *Could* they have been to the fair? I was unable to offer a word.

"Have some of the girls in, and ask 'em, if you don't believe me," continued Mrs. Nash. "Not Miss Powis; she'll deny it."

Lucy, full of indignant disbelief, flew upstairs, and brought down some of the elder girls: they had begun to undress, and had to re-apparel themselves again. I addressed them kindly, and begged them to speak the truth fearlessly: Did they go to the shows at the fair, or not?

A dead silence, and then a very long drawn-out "Yes" from a faint voice. Lucy threw her hands up to her face: she was more excitable than I.

"That's right, children," cried Mrs. Nash: "never speak nothing but the truth, and then you'll not get into trouble. And if—goodness save us, they are beginning to cry! Why, you have nothing to be frightened at. There's no great harm in going to shows: I have gone to 'em myself, hundreds of times."

"And what did you see?" groaned Lucy. "Speak up. I insist upon knowing. Everything."

"Lady Jane Grey, in wax-work, going to execution, in a black shroud and Protestant prayer-book; and Henry the Eighth and his six wives, in white veils and silver fringe, one of them with a baby in three ostrich feathers; and the young Queen Victoria being crowned, with her hair let down, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, in a grey mitre and green whiskers, pouring oil on her—no, the mitre was green and the whiskers were grey; and Earl Rochester with a sword and an eye-glass, looking through it at Nell Gwynne; and King William in a pilot-coat, drinking coffee with the Queen Dowager; and Jane Shore in a white sheet, and—oh, dear! we can't recollect all," was the answer Lucy received, with a burst of sobs between every sentence.

"Oh, you unhappy children!" responded Lucy. "And did all of you go into this wax-work?"

"N—o. Some went into the theatre."

"The theatre! What did you see there?"

"A play—very beautiful. About a princess who wanted to marry somebody, and her father wanted her to marry somebody else, and she died right off on the stage for love, amongst the wax-lights."

"Wax-lights!" repeated Mrs. Nash, with a hearty laugh. "Why, you innocents! they were nothing but halfpenny dips. Was there plenty of dancing and singing?"

"Y—es. The dancers were from the Opera in London, they said; stars, condescendingly come there because the season was over." And this made Mrs. Nash laugh again, but Lucy looked all the graver.

"Young ladies," I interposed, "I believe you have told me the

truth : tell me a little more. How came you to go ? Who proposed it, or induced you ? ”

“ It was Miss Powis. She took us. Oh, indeed ”—with a very genuine burst of sobs—“ we should never have gone of ourselves.”

“ I told you so,” cried Mrs. Nash, triumphantly, and Lucy left the room with the children. “ I heard of it the next day from one of the workmen at my willa, who was there and saw them. But of course it was no business of mine—till now.”

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE.

THE scene in our house the following morning was beyond description. Mrs. Nash called in a policeman, and gave Miss Powis into custody for stealing her two handkerchiefs. The latter, in tears and the extreme of agitation, protested she had never touched either. There was an air of indignant truth about her, impossible, I thought, to be assumed. I am a great reader of countenances and manner, and I have some penetration, and I thought I could have staked my life upon the girl's innocence. The policeman a little disenchanted me. “ When you have had the experience we have, ma'am,” he said, “ you'll let assertions of innocence and aspects of truth go for what they are worth, and that's moonshine.” Miss Powis offered the keys of her boxes, and insisted upon their being searched, and that her clothes should be examined. I thought she would have gone out of her senses, so great was her excitement, especially after her father arrived.

“ Confess where the property is, and then I'll let you off,” said Mrs. Nash, in answer to her impassioned appeals.

“ I have not got it. I never had it. I swear it before Heaven.”

“ Policeman, get a fly. We'll go up to the police-court.”

“ Be ye merciful, even as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful,” broke in the pleading voice of Mr. Powis, a quiet, gentlemanly man, with a sad amount of care in his pale face. “ I am sure, madam, my daughter is innocent : subject her not to this dreadful disgrace. The property may yet be found to have been mislaid.”

“ Moonshine, sir ! as that policeman has just said about looks. Where can it have been mislaid to ? up the chimney, or into the fire—when there was none in the grate ? ”

“ I beseech you to show a little mercy. Give time. Think what your feelings would be if a child of your own was accused ! ”

“ I never had no child, but one, and that died when it was only a week old,” responded Mrs. Nash. “ The fact is, sir, when young women have a propensity for dancing off to fair-shows and donkey-racing, it's no wonder if they help themselves to things not their own to pay for it.”

"But Caroline has not been to such places!" uttered the astonished Mr. Powis.

"Hasn't she, though! Policeman, what are you standing there for, doing nothing? If you don't choose to get a fly, I'll call in some other officer."

We must have made a strange sight, driving away from our gate and up to London in that fly! Mrs. Nash, myself, Mr. Powis and his daughter inside, the latter sobbing hysterically, and the policeman on the box, beside the driver. Mr. Powis had already offered to pay the value of the handkerchiefs, for which the magistrate, afterwards, accused him of a wish to compound a felony; and I am sure I would have paid it twice over, rather than have had such a scandal emanating from my house. But Mrs. Nash would not listen: she said she did not want the value, she wanted the property.

It appeared to me that the sitting magistrate was a great brute, or else that he was, that morning, in a dreadful temper. He is no longer a magistrate now, at least in this world, so it is of no consequence my recording my opinion. I have no clear recollection of the scene now, and never did have; I was too much bewildered and annoyed. I know that the court appeared to me a Babel of staring eyes and confusion, and I felt thoroughly ashamed of being within it.

"What's your name?" growled the magistrate when the case was called on.

"Caroline Frances Powis, sir," said her father.

"Can't she answer for herself, sir?" was the surly rejoinder. "Ever here before, officer?"

"No, your worship. Not unfavourably known. In fact, not known at all."

I need not give the particulars of the examination, having already mentioned the facts. I know I was called as evidence, and never knew afterwards how I gave it. I daresay the Court thought I was a great simpleton.

"Now, young woman," growled the magistrate, "what have you to say to this?"

She was a great deal too hysterical to say anything; and I must remark that his manner was enough to terrify the most innocent prisoner into an appearance of guilt. The old—I was going to write fool, but I'll put magistrate—committed her for trial. I thought I should have fainted when I heard it. And to have witnessed the graceless crowd assembled there bursting into a titter when it came out that our young ladies had gone to the show-booths on the sly! My cheeks are tingling with the recollection now.

He said he would admit her to bail; and while Mr. Powis went out to get it we were put into a dark, dirty room of the Court—locked in, I daresay. After that—it was a long while—we rode home again, but Mrs. Nash was not with us then. People asked why I remained when the examination was over, but I could not find

in my heart to leave the poor thing alone: I should never have reconciled it to my conscience afterwards.

"She must go to your house, Mr. Powis," I whispered to him as the fly was nearing home; "I may not take her again to mine."

"You do not believe her guilty?" he rejoined.

I was puzzled what to answer. That morning I would have heartily said, No; but the thought had been imperceptibly insinuating itself into my mind, in the atmosphere of that police-court—if she did not take the handkerchiefs, where were they? That going to the fair had its bias on my judgment; it had weighed heavily with the magistrate, and *I saw it was beginning to do so with her father*. Disobedience, as I told you, is sure to bring its own punishment. So she went to her father's home, and we procured another teacher.

Now, it was a strange thing, but some days afterwards Caroline Powis was attacked with measles. Perhaps she caught the disease in the Court; I shall always think so, for we were brought into contact with sundry poverty-stricken, ghastly-looking people, and there was not a single case of it in our neighbourhood. She had never had the disorder, and was extremely ill, the doctor, at one time, giving no hope of her. But she grew better, and when all danger of my carrying the infection back to the school was past, I went to see her. She was lying in bed, looking thin and white, but a hectic flush spread over her cheeks when she saw me.

"I am sorry to see you here, my dear," I said; "I hoped you were up long since."

"I hope I shall never get up again," she eagerly answered; "I do not wish to. All the world believes me guilty."

"Not all the world," I said, soothingly. Poor thing! Whether culpable or not, I was grieved to see her lying there, so lonely and woebegone.

"Yes, they do. My father, my brothers and sisters, even my mother, all believe it now. I am sure you do, Miss Halliwell. They harp so much upon my having gone to the shows, and say if I did the one I might have done the other. I hope I shall never get up from here again. And the thought of the trial terrifies me night and day. It comes over me as a dreadful nightmare, from which I try to escape and cannot, and then I scream with terror."

"That is true," Mrs. Powis said to me when we went downstairs. "If she suddenly wakes up in the night her terror is so great that I have to hasten from my room to soothe her. She asserts that she shall never get up from her bed again, and I do not think she will. The dread of this disgrace, of her standing in public to be tried as a common criminal, seems literally to be killing her by inches. Caroline was always so sensitive."

My recollection is not clear upon one point: whether she ought to have been tried before the long vacation, or whether the trial was originally fixed for after the assembling of the Courts in November. I

think the former, and that it was postponed on account of her illness. At any rate, November came in, and she had not been tried. Oh, those long, weary months to her! Poor girl!

The week of the trial came; it was to be on a Thursday, and on the Monday evening previously Mrs. Powis called at our house. It was quite late, had struck eight o'clock, and Lucy and I were just sitting down to our homely supper. I pressed her to take some. She would not, but accepted a glass of wine.

"Poor Caroline wants to see you, Miss Halliwell," she said to me. "She has been dwelling upon it these many days, but more than ever this afternoon."

"How is she?" I and Lucy eagerly asked.

"I think she is dying," was the answer. "I do not believe she will be alive on Thursday—the day she has so much dreaded. Of course the trial will be put off again, for she could not be moved from her bed to attend it."

The words shocked me greatly, and Lucy let fall her knife upon her cheese-plate, and chipped a piece out of it.

"To tell you the truth," continued poor Mrs. Powis, bursting into tears, "I have held back from asking you to come, but her urgency this evening has been so great, I could refuse no longer. I do so fear," she hesitated, dropping her voice to a whisper, "that she may be going to *confess* to you, as she thinks she is about to die; and to know that she has confessed her guilt would almost kill me. Though her father has been inclined to judge her harshly, I have unconsciously clung with hope to her constant assertions of innocence."

"Do you wish me to come to-night?"

"Oh, no. I had a minute's leisure this evening, and so ran out. Come to-morrow, if that will suit you."

"But to be dying," interposed Lucy; "it seems so strange! What complaint has she? What is she dying of?"

"A galloping consumption, as the doctor says, and as I believe," answered Mrs. Powis. "My father went off in the same way, and my only sister. They were both well, and ill, and dead in two months, and—unlike her—had no grief to oppress them. Caroline might not have lived, even if this unhappy business had never occurred; the measles seemed to take such hold upon her constitution. Then I may tell her you will come, Miss Halliwell?"

"Yes, indeed. I will come as soon as I can, after morning school."

Mrs. Powis left, and I and Lucy sat over the fire, talking. "I would give something," she said, in a musing manner, "to know whether Caroline Powis was really guilty. I fear she was: but if it had not been for that show-going, my belief in it would have been more difficult."

"Lucy, she was certainly guilty. What else could have become of the pocket-handkerchiefs? And her conduct since, this excessive prostration and grief, is scarcely consistent with conscious innocence."

May the angels, who heard that uncharitable opinion of mine, blot out its record! Cause of repentance for having uttered it came to me very shortly, proving how chary we ought to be in condemning others, even when appearances and report are against them.

"Who art thou that presumest to judge another?"

After twelve the next morning, I put on my bonnet and shawl, and was going out at the door when Lucy ran up, and called to me.

"Hester, you may as well step into the dressmaker's, as you will pass her door," she said. "Ask her whether she means to let us have our new dresses home or not, and when. She has had them nearly a month, and never been to try them on."

Upon what trifling circumstances great events turn!

I went into the dressmaker's on my way. Her assistant and the two apprentices were in the workroom, but not herself.

"Miss Smith won't be two minutes, ma'am," said one of them; "she is only upstairs, trying on a lady's mantle. Or shall we give her any message?"

No, I determined to wait and see her myself, for I had sent her messages without end, and the dresses seemed none the nearer. She was always overwhelmed with work. So I sat down. One of the young women was busy with a green satin dress, unpicking the lining from the skirt. I knew it at once.

"Is not that Mrs. Nash's?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the assistant. "She has got the bottom of the skirt jagged out and dirty, so we are going to let it down from the top and take the bad in, and put in a new lining. There's plenty of satin turned in at the top—a good three inches. She says she always has her gowns made so. It's not a bad plan."

Miss Smith came in, and I was talking to her, when the young person who was unpicking the dress suddenly exclaimed: "My patience! what's this?"

We both turned. She was drawing something from between the lining and the satin skirt, and we all pressed round to look. *It was an embroidered handkerchief.*

"As sure as fate it is the one the rumpus was about!" uttered Miss Smith, in excitement; "the one poor Miss Powis was accused of stealing. What a providential coincidence, ma'am, that you stepped in, and were here to witness it!"

"Look if there's another," I said to the young girl; "there were two lost." And she bent down her face, and looked in between the lining and the dress.

"Here's something else," she said. "Yes, sure enough, it is another handkerchief. But this is a plain one."

It was even so. After months of agitation to many, and of more than agitation to Caroline Powis, the two lost handkerchiefs were brought to light in this mysterious manner. It appeared that the

sewing of the pocket-hole, the thread which attached the lining to the satin, had come undone, and when Mrs. Nash had put, as she thought and intended, the handkerchiefs into her pocket, each had slipped down between the lining and the dress. The truth might have been detected earlier, but she had scarcely had the gown on since leaving my house : in its present "jagged" state, it was deemed too shabby for the splendours of the new villa.

"When I went out at Miss Smith's door, I stopped and hesitated. Should I go to Caroline Powis, or should I go to Mrs. Nash ? That I would visit both I fully determined on. Better ease *her* mind first.

I was shocked at the alteration in her appearance when I entered her chamber : the attenuated features, their hectic flush, and the wandering eye. She struggled up in bed when she saw me.

"Oh, Miss Halliwell," she eagerly exclaimed, "I thought you were never coming. I am going to die—even the doctor admits that there is no hope. I have wanted to tell you, once again, that I am innocent of that dreadful thing—and you will not think I would utter anything but truth in dying."

"Dear child," I said, "I have news for you. Your innocence is proved to me, to your mother—for I have just told her ; there she stands, sobbing with joy—and it will soon be proved to the whole neighbourhood. The handkerchiefs are found and you are exculpated. Providence, who is ever merciful, has brought the truth to light, in His own mysterious way."

It affected her so much less than I had anticipated ! There was no burst of excitement, no fainting, very little increase of the hectic flush. She sank back upon her pillow and clasped her hands upon her bosom. It may be that she was too near the portals of another world for the joys or sorrows of this one violently to affect her.

"I have had but one prayer since I lay here," she whispered, at length : "that God would make manifest my innocence ; if not before my death, after it. Dear mamma"—holding out her hand—"my father will not be ashamed of me now. And for the going to the shows—that surely may be forgiven me, for I have suffered deeply for it. Tell the truth to all the schoolgirls, Miss Halliwell."

When I went to Mrs. Nash's, which I did at once, that lady was seated in great state in her dining-room, eating her luncheon, for she had taken to fashionable hours now. It was served on an elegant service of Worcester china, and consisted of pork chops and pickles, mashed potatoes, apple-tart and cheese, with wine and ale. She did not invite me to partake of it, which compliment I thought would have been only polite, as there was great abundance. Not that I should have done so. But, in her new grandeur, we schoolmistresses were deemed very far beneath her.

"Well," she said, "have you come about this bothering trial ?

Take a seat ; there, by the fire if you like. I hear it is to be put off again."

"Put off for good, I think, Mrs. Nash."

"Put off for good ! What do you mean ? If the judges think to grant a reprieve or pardon, or whatever it's called, and so squash the affair before it comes on, my husband shall show 'em up in the courts for it. I'll make him. I don't say but what I'm sorry for the girl and her long illness, but then she shouldn't have been obstinate, and refused to confess. I can't help fancying, too, that the illness is part sham, a dodge to escape the trial altogether."

"You talk about her confessing, Mrs. Nash, but suppose she had nothing to confess, that she was really innocent, what else could she have done than deny it ?"

"Suppose the world's made of soft soap," broke forth Mrs. Nash, scornfully. "How can you be such a gaby, Miss Halliwell ? Why, you are almost as old as I am—oh, yes, you are. Not quite, may be ; but when one dies from old age, the other will be quaking. If Caroline Powis did not steal the handkerchiefs, where did they go to, pray ? Stuff !"

"They are found," I said.

She was carrying the tumbler of ale to her mouth, for she had continued her meal without heed to my presence, but she stared at me, and put it down untasted.

"The handkerchiefs are found, Mrs. Nash, and I have seen them."

"Where were they ? Who found them ? Who took them ?" she asked, reiterating question upon question. "Has she given them up, thinking I'll let her off from being tried ?"

"Do you remember, ma'am, that the day you lost the handkerchiefs you had on your green satin gown ? Both days."

"Green satin gown ! For all I know, I had. What has that to do with it ?"

"They were unpicking the gown this morning at Miss Smith's, and inside the lining ——"

"What are you going to tell me ?" screamed Mrs. Nash, as if a foreshadowing of the truth had flashed upon her, whilst she threw down her knife and fork on the table, and pushed her chair away from it. "I declare you quite frighten me, with your satin gowns and your unpicking, and your long, mysterious face. Don't go and say I have accused the girl unjustly !"

"Between the lining and the dress they found the two handkerchiefs," I quietly proceeded. "They must have fallen in there, the hemming of the pocket-hole being unsewn, when you thought you were putting them into your pocket. Sarah persisted, if you remember, that she saw you putting the first in, a few minutes before you missed it."

I never saw such a countenance as hers at that moment. She turned as red as fire, and her mouth gradually opened and

remained so. Presently she started up, speaking in much excitement.

"Come along, Miss Halliwell. I'll go to the dressmaker's, and have this out at once; confirmed or denied. Lawk-a-mercy! what reparation can I make to Caroline Powis?"

There was no reparation to be made. In vain Mrs. Nash sent jellies and blancmanges, and wings of chicken, and fiery port-wine to tempt the invalid back to life; in vain she drove daily up in her own carriage with her own liveried coachman ("such an honour for the like of that little cottage of the Powises!" quoth the neighbours), and sat by Caroline's bedside, and made all sorts of magnificent promises to her, if she would only get well; in vain she sent Mr. Powis's landlord a cheque for the quarter's rent, hearing there was some little difficulty about its payment, for Caroline's illness had been expensive and run away with all the ready money; and in vain she put the youngest child, a boy, rising nine, into the Blue-coat School, through an influential butcher, who was a common councilman and very great in his own ward and her husband's particular friend. Nothing recalled poor Caroline. "But don't grieve," she said to Mrs. Nash on the eve of her departure; "I am going to another and a better world." And she went to it.

Now it is quite possible, and indeed probable, that Caroline Powis would have died whether this disgrace had fallen on her or not, for consumption, very rapid consumption, was hereditary in her family. But the effect the unpleasant circumstances had upon me was lasting, and I made a resolve that if I lost all the pocket-handkerchiefs I possessed in the world, and had not so much as half a one left for use, I would never prosecute anyone for stealing them.

Should any be inclined to question this little episode in my domestic experience, I can only say that it is strictly true, and occurred exactly as I have related it. If Mrs. Nash is indignant with me for telling it, though so many years have since passed, and she still lives close by, I cannot help it, and I am under no obligation to her.

(To be continued.)



A DAY IN ANCIENT ROME.

THE ordinary occupations of London might furnish an interesting contrast to the mode of life pursued in Imperial Rome—perhaps two cases of more striking apposition could not be quoted.

The general exodus from suburbs to town which takes place in London at eight or nine every morning, in Rome could have no existence, for Rome possessed no suburbs. The business men who pour in their thousands from pleasant villas in the country into the city were represented in ancient Rome by a class equally numerous—that of slaves. The slaves were the general monopolists of all business labour of a subordinate kind, such as that performed by clerks, managers, foremen and shopmen. They were also the sole representatives of our mechanics, artisans, workmen, and the other performers of menial work. The proprietor of the establishment, whatever it might be, *bought* his *employés* as he might require them, kept them all on the premises, and compelled them to perform their labour not by the ties of duty or the promise of reward, but by the fear of punishment, which might at the master's pleasure be extended even to death.

Let us imagine a state of things existing where, shall we say, a large upholsterer, finding that his carriers were slow in delivering a cart-load of goods, executed them all on their arrival in Tottenham Court Road, and bought half-a-dozen fresh ones to supply their places—let us imagine this, and we shall have an idea of the relation between master and servant in ancient Rome.

The employés in the great business houses and manufactories rose, as may be expected, particularly early; and long before London is awake Rome was astir—at least, in this portion of its community. Sleeping on the premises, they descended or ascended to their labours after a hurried breakfast, and sedulously plied them all day, with short intervals for meals, which were all supplied by the master.

If we enter one of these large workshops or manufactories we shall find it not very different from the appearance which would be presented by a similar place to-day, except only in the absence of machinery, and the natural deficiency in certain trade improvements with which two thousand years have rendered men more familiar.

Let us choose a porcelain factory, and we shall find slaves in scores manipulating the self-same potter's wheel which may be seen in use at Stoke and its environs at the present hour, forming cups, vases, bowls with equal dexterity and, according to ocular evidence, with far greater beauty.

Let us enter a publisher's—for there were publishers in ancient Rome no less than in modern London—and we shall see at early

sunrise rows and rows of tables, capable of accommodating many a thousand slaves, filled with their busy occupants, all with head inclined to their left shoulder, with ink before them, parchment in front of them and pen in hand, producing an edition of some favourite poet or prose writer. The same division of labour prevails as in a printing-office: each copyist has his special portion of "copy" before him, which are afterwards transmitted to the binder to arrange and bring together. The poems of Virgil could be turned out at the rate of one volume in half-an-hour by such vast multitudes of writers.

While the clerks, mechanics and artisans are thus early astir in Rome—rising before dawn and being in the thick of their labours by sunrise—there is another class in the city who are equally early afield. These are the Prætorian Guards, who, with braying trumpets and clashing cymbals, march through the Forum on their way to the Campus Martius for military exercise. Though the hour is still so early, there are plenty of spectators abroad, among the rest school-boys, to stand and stare at their glittering uniforms and listen to the martial din of their instruments.

Schools met early, by which we may fairly judge that the whole household, or at least the female portion of it, rose betimes, in order to prepare breakfast for the juveniles and to see them off for the often distant academy where they received their education. In winter time the boys were provided with lamps when they left home, for winter and summer made no difference in their hours; and for many a long hour they used to stand shivering with cold in the early morning poring over their Horaces or Virgils, and with nothing but the flame of their lamps to warm them.

Early rising, however, was not confined to these classes of the community, being prevalent amongst everyone.

The first meal of the day, the *jentaculum*, or breakfast, was taken between five and six, and consisted of a little fruit, bread and wine. After this the mature and independent portion of the citizens began to spend their day according to their usual custom.

The business element in Rome was in the hands of a class of citizens who were called the Knights—a term which had descended from ancient times, and had no justification in a military sense at the time we are writing of—the age of Nero or Domitian. Those citizens who were so favoured by fortune or their fathers' industry as to have a lucrative business occupation to attend to, found employment for themselves in superintending their stores or manufactories, and busied themselves there, with a few intervals, all day.

But the majority of Roman citizens bred and born were not so highly favoured by their good genius. Society at large, as we understand the term, was divided into two great classes—clients and patrons, the former depending almost entirely on the latter for support, house-room, and even clothing—depending, that is to say,

not on any legal obligation on the patron's part, but purely on his liberality.

This peculiar relation of Roman citizens to one another had a great influence on the arrangement of the Roman day.

The clients, who comprised about one entire half of the freeborn Romans, found their day mapped out for them despite their reluctance; and directly they rose in the morning their first duty was to run to their patron's house, make inquiries after his health, and if possible obtain entrance at the door for the sake of saluting him. "While yet the Great Bear is turning in the sky," says a Latin poet of the time, "while the cold, raw morning is sending its showers of sleet into the face of the wayfarer, the clients begin their morning calls. So eager are they to be there first, they do not stay to buckle their sandals. And some hang about the porch from the night before, intending to anticipate the others."

What vast concourses of people must have been traversing the streets hither and thither, hanging about the doors of great houses, talking, chattering, laughing, idling!—this was a spectacle unique among all the other capital cities of the world that have since been or that will be.

But still more extraordinary was the second great business of the day among Roman citizens.

The salutation over, they hastened home, and reappeared in a short while with baskets, dishes and tins in their hands, which they carried with unblushing deliberation to the doors of the great houses which they had occupied the early morning in besieging. The well-to-do citizens, who still were not exactly the high nobility, came in palanquins or litters to these places of aristocratic charity, concealing their baskets and other vessels amid the curtains of their carriages, or else deputing the conveyal of them to their slaves.

Mobs and crowds of respectable people were towards eleven to be seen surrounding every stately portico in the *Esquilæ*, the *Carinæ*, and other fashionable districts in Rome where the "kings," as the nobility were called, held their residence. The hall-door, which has stood dumb and unrelenting to so many idle hands and hungry appetites so long, at last opens, and a struggle begins around the gates. The porter—important officer of dignity!—blocks the way, and demonstrates successfully that each person must take his turn or the cook will never be able to serve them.

A queue is now formed, and one by one the expectant clients come forward for their food. Basket after basket is filled as the crowd goes by—roast meat, chickens, soup, puddings are ladled out or handed into the receptacles. Some of the baskets are so constructed as to keep the provisions hot by the contrivance of a little brazier of live coals under the tin bottom of the wickerwork crate. At last the arduous work of serving so many hungry mouths is completed. The cook has come to an end of his store, the porter

of his patience, and the last client—for the pieces have been diminishing time after time—goes away dissatisfied.

We need not follow the clients home. They arrive there with the day's meal, which suffices for themselves, their wives and families. They have thus gained their maintenance for nothing; and now the whole day is before them to do anything they list. Their usual occupation is to congregate in the Forum, and spend the afternoon in talk and idle gossip. In the evening they retire early to rest, in order to wake early the next morning and renew their life of dependency, vassalage and idleness.

But the "kings," or members of the aristocracy, pursue a very different life from the types already mentioned. They have neither to labour at the bidding of any master, to direct the labours of others like the Knights, nor to pass the day in obsequious attendance and humiliating servility like the freeborn but very spiritless clients. They live on the fat of the land; they rise late and retire late to rest; their life is a round of pleasures, which have with them, nevertheless, as serious a rotation as the business of most men.

After partaking of a delicate breakfast, they drive in their porticoes for exercise and to procure an appetite for lunch. These porticoes are large roofed roads and squares, often of a mile or more in length, constructed in the pleasure grounds of the mansion that the horse-exercise may be enabled to continue in all weathers. So luxurious, however, has the Roman noble become by this time, that the sun is too strong for his complexion, as the rain is too coarse for his clothes; and not even the balmiest sunshine and mildest summer weather can tempt him to emerge from the shady porticoes into the green, inviting, but sunny lawns beyond.

Sufficient exercise having now been taken for his health, he pays a visit of inspection to some of the more favourite parts of his house and grounds—his stables, his fish-ponds, his aviaries, his menagerie, his dog-kennels. If any slave has been unruly, he orders his execution, and for punishment makes him swim across the fish-pond, where the lamprays are kept. The immense water-snakes seize the unhappy man as he swims across, and crush him into a mummy with their coils. He dies in agony as they devour him—and the flesh of the fishes is improved.

Luncheon, entitled *Prandium*, now takes place.

It is a collection of lighter dishes, principally whets to the appetite, with many sauces and wine. This enables the day to be passed until the real business of the day begins, namely, dinner.

The favourite occupation in the afternoon is ball playing. The game was played in courts somewhat resembling our racquet-courts, while the recreation itself approximated greatly to "fives." The ball-play is succeeded by sedentary games, such as draughts, unless some less venial amusement, such as horse racing or cock-fighting were

indulged in, into which we have no space here to enter. Draughts were a very fashionable before-dinner amusement, and were sometimes carried to the dinner-table and played during the first course. The draughts were often made of crystal, and the board of some costly stone.

To say that dinner was the chief occupation of wealthy Romans is no exaggeration. The vice of eating is no less seductive than is that of drinking, and infinitely more costly. To Britain, to Africa, to the Euxine, the world was ransacked for dainties to supply the evening banquets of the great in Rome. If we are present at one of these banquets we shall see better than any general description could convey to us the sort of entertainment which concluded the evening of a wealthy Roman's day.

Before sitting—we should rather say lying down, since the seats at table took the form of couches, on which the guests reclined—everyone in the company confides himself to the tender mercies of a slave in an adjoining room, who administers an emetic to each individually, in order to sharpen a languid appetite.

Places are now taken at table, and slaves begin to hand about the dishes and wine, singing perpetually a melodious strain as they do so, in tune to which the carver likewise, when his services are required, cuts the meat. The first course, agreeably to the well-known adage "from egg to apple," invariably consists of eggs—but what sort of eggs? A hen made of elegantly cut wood or moulded plaster is brought in on a dish containing straw, as if she were sitting on her eggs. She is removed by a slave, and the eggs beneath her are handed to the company, but when broken are found to be composed of sugar shells, and each inside them to have a roasted beccafico.

The second course consists of an immense architectural structure of pastry and savouries in the form of a temple. In the midst of this enormous chef d'œuvre of the cook's art is a green turf, on it a honey-comb. Various plates of pastry or vegetables are laid out around it, as are chickens; on another a hare, on another cutlets; elsewhere ducks, widgeons, quails—an array of all sorts of eatables. Round the entire structure flows a river of fish-sauce, in which fishes fried and boiled are seen apparently to swim. On the top of all is a great fountain of wine, which spurts up in a stream and is caught in an alabaster basin.

Before the next course comes on, slaves enter carrying coverlets of tapestry, on which are depicted hunting scenes. They themselves are armed with bows and spears, and dressed to represent huntsmen. They spread the coverlets over the couches, and hang up some of them round the wall.

A jingling and a shout is heard outside, the door is flung open, and immediately a boar enters the room and tears round between the tables, followed by a pack of dogs in full cry, and huntsmen behind them. The boar is caught and speared before the company—having

been previously rendered harmless by the extraction of its tusks and teeth. It is carried out of the room. A little comedy is now enacted, which has been pre-arranged between the master of the house and his cook. The cook is called up, and informed that the company desire to taste that very boar for their next course. The man promises to comply with their request, leaves the room, and, to borrow the Roman expression, "in less time than one could roast a chicken," brings in the identical boar ready cooked, and perfectly done. To show how perfect is his art, he gives one slash to the side and out tumbles a deluge of sausages. A fawn roasted whole is now served up at table. The carver inserts his knife; from the incision he makes in the stomach, a flock of thrushes fly out, which are caught by slaves stationed for that purpose about the apartment. In this way the banquet proceeds, with copious libations of wine throughout; lasting sometimes from eight to ten hours.

At imperial banquets and banquets specially splendid, other attractions were added.

Sometimes the whole roof of the chamber was suddenly lifted, and tight-rope dancers were seen walking about over the heads of the company. Sometimes dancers were admitted to career between the tables or in prepared avenues on them. Sometimes the agony of the grey mullet was displayed for the amusement of the company, in which Roman cruelty was seen to its perfection. This fish, it is well-known, changes its colour when dying, and assumes all the hues of the rainbow in succession while the death agony is upon it. Pipes were laid down communicating with the fish-ponds, the other end of the pipes being on salvers which were laid before the banqueters; the sluice was turned, and immediately a beautiful grey mullet floated, vigorous with life, on to the salver before the banqueter. The spectacle of feasting the eyes on its dying agony while the beautiful fish slowly expired on the salver, emitting all the time iridescent tints, was considered to be a sight worthy to be presented for the entertainment of friends, and of sufficient importance to justify a special and costly construction of pipes from the exterior of the mansion to the tables in the banqueting hall.



A LATE SPRING.

BY G. B. STUART.

THROUGHOUT all that vast and vague region commonly known as "abroad," the two Miss Severnes are as well known as Milan Cathedral or the Germania at Rudesheim.

Their parentage, to be sure, is English ; but their tastes, habits, accomplishments and sympathies are cosmopolitan ; indeed, they speak French, German and Italian better than they do English, and can make their wants known, it is hinted, in Spanish and Russian. They have a stronger personality than most of the nomad single ladies who spend their lives in floating from one Continental place to another ; and they have left their kindly mark on many a German Bad-Ort or Riviera health resort or Swiss mountain hotel.

Who but the Miss Severnes built the tiny English church at Col du Midi ? They could only give a few francs towards the collection themselves, it is true ; but how they took the matter to heart, and worked and talked and thought for nothing else till the deed was done, and a passing bishop caught to consecrate the fait accompli ! Just after this, the disastrous fire in the Grisons destroyed Pettars and all its industries ; luckily the Miss Severnes were summering at Grindelwald, and the bazaar which they hastily inaugurated at their hotel put the curé of the place in possession of a hundred pounds with which to start his wood-carvers afresh. The following winter they took a sick young governess into their apartment at Florence, and nursed her through the severe attack of malarial fever, which resulted—not in the death of the patient, which all the English community had breathlessly looked for during three weeks of anxiety—but in her happy marriage with the Italian doctor, almost before her cropped hair had grown again.

But it is needless to go on quoting instances of their energy and kindness : everyone who knows anything of the Continent must have experienced them, directly or indirectly. Fortunate those whose paths have crossed the Miss Severnes', and who have heard their hearty "Au revoir," "Auf Wiedersehn," "A Rivederci," at parting, as the case might be.

In person they are tall and comely ladies of a certain age. Miss Severne, who has the rare Roman nose and the presence of Du Maurier's "Duchess," is a manly (not a mannish) woman ; and her Christian name, Sydney, is, curiously, suitable for either sex. She has a singularly wide grasp of all the social and political questions of the day, imbibed from the newspapers of all nations which, affixed to uncomfortably long sticks, she has studied in all the public news-rooms of the world.

Obstacles are of no account to Miss Severne : she has been seen to possess herself of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, wresting it out of the very hands of an astonished Prussian lieutenant, and pushing an old copy of *Kladderadatch* into its place, with such an air that the defrauded officer could only salute, with his heels brought together and his hand to his ear, as if a great honour had been done him.

Miss Anne, her sister, is made of softer stuff, and is eight or ten years younger, having still a slight, youthful figure and a charmingly pink complexion. At a distance she looks like Miss Severne's daughter or niece ; but when you see her closer you observe the fine network of delicate wrinkles, the pensive droop of the mouth, the rather languid blue eyes, which tell of more than forty years of what is known as "indifferent health."

It was for Miss Anne's health, or rather want of it, that the sisters first took up their roving life twenty years ago.

The plan has so far answered that Miss Anne, at forty-two, is far stronger, livelier and more usefully happy than she was as a girl of twenty in the secluded country village of which her father was rector, and where with her father's death every tie of relationship was severed. They were positively without kith and kin in the world : there was nobody to say that the Severne girls were turning their backs on home duties when they elected to exchange the green solitudes of Loamshire for the varied scenes of the Continent ; no one to hint at neglected responsibilities when they slipped into the foreign fashion of passing from place to place with the change of seasons, and did not return to Dumbidge at all.

"The greatest conceivable blessing," Miss Severne was fond of saying, in her deep, cultivated voice, "is to occupy a position in which you need not refer your conduct to anybody's criticism : " not that any of Miss Severne's friends could imagine her submitting the pros and cons of her doings to any less august tribunal than her own opinion.

As for Miss Anne, she accepted her elder sister's dictum as to the desirability of being sans famille as unhesitatingly as she accepted everything else that Sydney proposed for her good. Sydney knew so very much best about everything ! and if her heart sometimes unconsciously yearned towards the young people she met in her travels, who, in point of age might have been her own children, or nephews and nieces, had she and Sydney not stood so persistently alone in the world—she hid the passing weakness from her sister, almost even from herself, with the feeling that it was akin to treachery.

Miss Anne had gone so far as to kiss an Italian peasant woman's baby, when she was out one day by herself, but she would have died with shame to think that such a proceeding could come to Miss Sydney's ears : Miss Sydney had never been known to notice a child, unless to point out to its mother or attendant that it was becoming bandy from being set to walk too soon, or that its eyes were growing

weak from exposure to the light, or that it suffered from some other of the hundred and one small ailments which never afflict old maids' children.

But, in spite of some little peculiarities, you might search the length and breadth of "abroad" without finding two kinder, warmer or more generous hearts than those that beat under the black silk bodices of the Miss Severnes: black silk had been the proper wear for a rector's daughters when the Severnes left Loamshire, and it had remained their favourite wear ever since, never looking over smart, and seldom more shabby than real gentility admits of. Their sedate attire was varied by very cheerful, even brilliant, bonnets, whose adoption was regulated by the feasts of the Church, Easter producing a crop of primroses and Parma violets, Whitsuntide a wealth of white ribbons, the later Sundays in Trinity coronals of autumn foliage in various shades of velvet, which were, in themselves, a noticeable form of Church decoration.

Easter Sunday at Badwiesen, that little Rhine town that is always gay and warm and beloved of its visitors at all seasons of the year, had filled the new English Church to overflowing; it was a late Easter, and the spring tourists were treading fast on the heels of the winter visitors; though, as a rule, the two sets kept distinct from each other.

The Miss Severnes, in all the seasonable glory of white and coloured lilac bunches surmounting their last year's bonnets, which had been deftly rejuvenated by Miss Anne's quick fingers, occupied their usual place, the second pew from the harsh little harmonium which led the musical devotions of the Badwiesen English. It was the sort of harmonium which is so often to be found in new churches and schoolrooms, an instrument against which all right-thinking people possessed of ear and voice do their best to uplift a protesting tune, and which generally succeeds in droning down the cheerfulest melody. Where the hymn-tunes in Badwiesen Church would have been but for the Severnes it is hard to say, but Miss Anne had a clear sweet treble which no masterful Gregorian chant could betray either into sharpness or flatness, while Miss Severne's very excellent imitation of a bass always seemed to reprove and keep in order the unruly tones of the creaking harmonium.

"Our triumphant Holy-day!" sang Miss Anne Severne, in the introductory Easter Hymn, as the chaplain took his place, and the handful of English boys who were his pupils filed in to the chancel seats behind him, clad for the first time in the snowy surplices at which all the ladies of the congregation, headed by Miss Sydney, had been working so assiduously during Lent.

"Young Hazell has fastened his hind side before!" whispered Miss Sydney to her sister in a tone of suppressed fury; "that boy must be half-witted, and the others encourage him"—but Miss Anne made no reply, for the hymn had come to an end, and in the

moment's pause that followed, the German waiter, who was picking up English rapidly by a voluntary attendance at all the English services as verger, hurried a party of late comers to the very top of the church and installed them in the front pew. By which action he showed that he was picking up English customs, at least, as fast as he could !

Then the chaplain began the sentences, and the late comers settled themselves as well as they were able in their seats, which being immediately in front of the reading-desk were as exposed, as inconvenient and uncomfortable as possible, and the congregation were at liberty to regard their backs or their profiles during the remainder of the service with that interest which a small, self-satisfied community always accords to a new element, and which in Badwiesen is the special attitude of the winter residents towards the spring visitors.

The party who occupied the front pew were three in number, and the male sex predominated, in itself an unusual occurrence. There was a tall, grizzled man of the Anglo-Indian "Colonel" type, a fresh-faced slip of a schoolboy with just enough likeness and unlikeness to the elder man to suggest that his wife might have been a plump, pink-and-white lady, with fair hair and blue eyes like the boy's ; and a tiny girl of six or thereabouts, with an anxious little face, long drooping curls, and the cumbersome, old-fashioned dress by which widowers' children are so often to be distinguished.

The Colonel (there was no mistaking his military bearing) had a hatband round his tall hat, which, like every true Englishman, he had brought abroad for Sunday observance ; the schoolboy, who was dressed with all the precision of Harrow or Eton at fourteen, had a band likewise and a black silk necktie ; but if further confirmation had been needed of the decease of the pink-and-white, flaxen-haired mother it was surely to be found in the heavy felt hat and ostrich feather, the cumbrous black cloth pelisse and the kid gloves, a size too large, which enveloped the little girl beside them. A pair of thin white thread socks, ending in rather clumsy laced boots, which stuck out at right angles to her little bundle of a body when her father lifted her on to the seat, made Miss Anne shiver.

"A nice comfortable pair of black stockings and a black sash on a white serge dress and jacket would have been mourning enough for that mite," she had hastily decided before she was half way through the "Te Deum ;" though, to be sure, it was no business of hers.

Presently, as the long church service wore on, the little girl in the front pew began to weary of following the places which her father so painstakingly pointed out to her in her prayer-book ; she listened with evident interest to the story of the first lesson, and at its close appealed to the Colonel with some question about the Egyptians, which had to be suppressed or postponed ; after that her attention wandered, and by dint of wriggling during the Litany she managed to command a view of the pew behind her, and thus to put herself as it were en rapport with Miss Anne Severne's pleasant face.

"For all sick persons—and young children," intoned the Chaplain : was there any harm in it, that Miss Anne's eyes smiled back at the little girl who had no mother, while her lips repeated for once mechanically, "We beseech Thee to hear us, Good Lord?"

Miss Sydney would have been very much annoyed had she noticed it, for, as the late Rector's daughter, she strongly advocated correct behaviour in church, only reserving to herself the right of whispering comments of disapproval in cases of levity.

By the time the service was over, Miss Anne Severne and the little girl in black were firm friends : they had mentally come to several conclusions about each other, little Molly Broke approving Miss Severne's lilac bonnet and delicate light gloves as heartily as the latter commiserated the other's heavy mourning ; their friendship was established on a thoroughly feminine basis, but dress is often an index of something deeper.

"I want to look at my pretty lady all over," whispered Molly excitedly to her father, tugging at his hand as the congregation streamed out into the sunshine after church. Perhaps it was the dazzle of the sudden brightness, or the little crush at the door that confused the child, for how it happened the Colonel could never say, but in an instant she had twisted herself out of his grasp, and, turning to look behind her, stumbled and fell the whole length of six steep steps on to the stone pavement below.

A dozen hands were outstretched to help, but it was Miss Anne Severne who was kneeling in a moment beside the stunned child and held her softly in her lap regardless of the blood which dropped in heavy round patches upon the black silk dress and lilac bonnet strings.

"I don't think it is very serious," she said, bravely smiling up in Colonel Broke's agonised face ; "she is frightened and confused a little, and it has made her nose bleed ; but if you will let me take her into our house opposite I think a little sal volatile will put her all right, and we will make her tidy for you again."

And without waiting for permission, Miss Anne marched across the road with the dishevelled little girl held tight in her arms, straight in at the porte cochère of the white villa where the ladies had their modest flat.

Of the little crowd at the church door everybody was astonished to see such independent action on the part of the younger Miss Severne. Miss Sydney, who had lingered an instant behind to reprove the unwary Hazell, came hurrying out and learnt what had happened just in time to extend a properly majestic recognition to the Anglo-Indian Colonel, who, with his boy, was hesitating at the doorway of the villa, up whose wide staircase Miss Anne had disappeared with his child.

"We are fortunate in being so close at hand, and thus enabled to render your daughter some slight assistance," perorated Miss Severne in the voice she had inherited from the Rector.

The Colonel lifted his hat and stepped a pace or two back from the staircase up which he longed to rush three steps at a time, and whence the rustle of Miss Anne's silk skirts had ceased with the shutting of a door above.

"My name is Broke—Colonel Broke," he said; "my children and I only arrived last evening and put up at the Hotel de l'Europe; it is such a long way to the other side of the town, otherwise you should not have been troubled with my poor little Molly's catastrophe. I'm afraid your—er—er—friend has been put to a great deal of trouble;" and again he looked longingly at the staircase.

"My sister," Miss Severne said a little stiffly—she was not accustomed to meeting people who did not know who the Miss Severnes were—"has had a good deal of delicate health, and will consequently know exactly what is right to recover your little daughter," and with that she began slowly to ascend the stairs, signing imperially to the Brokes, father and son, to follow.

All this had taken time, and Miss Severne was not a person to hurry either her words or actions, so that by the time the party had reached the glass door on the second landing which gave entrance to her apartment, Miss Anne, with the quick, clever touches which she kept for the assistance of other people, had staunched the trickling blood from Molly's nostrils, washed her pale face, and pulling off the objectionable hat and pelisse, had disclosed a deep white lace frill on a sombre little black gown, which gave her the air of a small Puritan.

They were friends in a minute, these two. Molly tossed off the wine-glassful of hot, sweet stuff that Miss Anne prepared from one of her little bottles without a word of demur, and by the time the footsteps of the others were heard outside the glass door, she had a little pink in her cheeks again, and asked appealingly:

"May I open the door for papa, please?"

"How do you do, little girl? I trust you are recovered?" said Miss Severne, sailing in, but Molly, who did not know that her interlocutor was almost a public character, dashed into her father's arms, with:

"Oh, papa! I'm so glad to see you. I'm all right again, and Miss Anne has put me straight, and she says I am to stop to dinner, if you'll let me, only I'm afraid I have spoilt her new bonnet strings!"

Miss Anne, who, now the excitement was over, had time to realise that she had acted independently for the first time in her life, had retreated to her own room at the end of the little passage to remove her bonnet and mantle, and perhaps to allow the new elements to settle down in the drawing-room. By the time she had smoothed her already ultra smooth hair, folded her outdoor things away and washed her hands, she felt sure that Sydney's master mind would have put everything in the way of introduction or explanation on a proper footing.

"My sister, Miss Anne Severne—Colonel Broke," introduced Miss Severne from her arm-chair, as the gentleman rose to greet the soft-faced, middle-aged lady, whom he now saw to be less young than he had thought her when she passed him hurriedly with Molly in her arms. He bowed in an old-fashioned manner before he took Anne's out-stretched hand, but Molly marred the solemnity of the ceremony by clutching at her new friend's skirts with a reassuring :

"You may call her 'Miss Anne,' papa, if you like ; at least she says I may, and I'm to stop and have soup with A's and B's floating in it !"

"If you lie quietly down on the sofa for a quarter of an hour till Kätchen lays the dinner, I said," and Miss Anne lifted up the child and put her down upon a distant sofa, seating herself at its foot, a little out of reach of Colonel Broke's thanks and excuses.

"Colonel Henry Broke, Bengal Staff Corps," read Miss Severne from the narrow black-edged visiting card which their new acquaintance left behind him in the little lobby when a few hours after he came to fetch away his child.

"A gentleman-like person, apparently ; but, Anne, we can't have the little girl here very often if you persist in playing with her till you become quite flushed. Lie down at once, and don't speak again till coffee comes up."

During the weeks that followed, Colonel Broke and his family grew very intimate with the Miss Severnes. Hardly a day passed that Gavin Broke's long legs did not carry him up their staircase, bearing some note or message from his father, and many coffee-drinking drives and expeditions to neighbouring sights were the result of little Molly's tumble down the church steps. Molly was generally panting up behind her brother, for she could not hear of anyone going to visit her Miss Anne without her ; and presently the Colonel would follow, just to see what had become of his children, and to make sure that they were not teasing the ladies, or taking up too much of their time. Miss Sydney talked Indian politics and the Ilbert Bill with the Colonel, while Miss Anne played beggar-my-neighbour with Gavin and Molly on the end of the sofa, all three of them laughing and eager to win the chocolate or *marron glacé* that the lady invariably produced for a prize. Sometimes the Colonel's eyes would stray to the group, which Miss Severne reproved for making so much noise ; he would grow fidgety in his chair and give his hostess such random answers about the state of public feeling in Calcutta that she began to wonder whether the climate there might not have slightly affected his brain.

One day Molly came bustling in with a long, narrow parcel, which she pressed into Miss Anne's hands : "It's from me, because I spoilt your pretty new ones that Sunday. At least"—here absolute truthfulness asserted itself—"papa ordered them to come from

Paris, only he said I was to say they was my present ;” and she was in a fever of impatience until the papers had been unfastened and the pretty delicate box disclosed, full of long and many-buttoned French gloves of the softest shades.

Miss Anne was quite in a flutter at this present, and doubtful whether she ought to accept it from a comparative stranger, but fortunately the offering tallied with Miss Severne’s notions of what was suitable to the occasion, and she told her sister that a lady might always accept flowers, books or gloves from an acquaintance, even a male acquaintance—especially when the little gift was presented in so tasteful a manner through the little girl ; and there was nothing more for Miss Anne to do but to hug Molly, and murmur some shy thanks to Colonel Broke at their next meeting, which made that gallant officer blush almost as pinkly as she did herself over their utterance.

“Pooh ! pooh ! Miss Anne,” he disclaimed, “I couldn’t allow you to spoil your things on that tiresome child’s account and not endeavour to replace them ; if I had dared I should like to have replaced the injured bonnet, though I doubt if Paris would have produced anything so becoming.”

“The bonnet was of no consequence, it was not a new one—I have easily put it to rights again.”

“New or not, it is the prettiest bonnet I have ever seen,” affirmed the Colonel, with decision, and just then Miss Severne came bustling up with the latest news of the Bulgarian Question culled from the reading-room, and Miss Anne and the Colonel started apart as if they had been talking treason.

Was it treason, Anne Severne wondered, when she began to realise how much she was engaging these new elements of interest in her life ?

The little salon, which was voted the prettiest in all Badwiesen, with its stands of ferns and mignonette, its ribbon-tied antimacassars and numberless knick-knacks, seemed so dull and empty if Molly and Gavin were not in it. Miss Severne sometimes grumbled for the quiet times that preceded their acquaintance with the Brokes, and then her younger sister felt constrained to dismiss the children at the porte cochère, or cut short their visits with a kindly “Now, Gavin, I think you must be going home ;” but for her all the light of those spring days was reflected from the two young faces so continually lifted up to hers. Gavin found her the most sympathetic confidante of all his hopes and expectations for the future ; he almost forgot the protest which he felt bound to make, as an English public schoolboy, against spending his holidays abroad when he was talking to Miss Anne, who listened with delight to his experiences of life as seen from the “shell,” while Molly, less voluble, was even more convincing with her whispered “I love you, I love you,” and her soft stroking of Miss Anne’s cheek.

The sweetness of stolen waters was in these caresses, for Miss

Sydney had said one day that she objected to seeing Anne allow herself to be "fingered over" by that child, and after that Anne repressed little Molly's attentions if her sister were present. But she took the children long walks in the woods, when they might all do exactly what they pleased, having slipped away from a coffee drinking on the terrace of the Kurhaus, where the band played of an afternoon, and where it was the custom of the Brokes to look for the two ladies after the early Badwiesen dinner.

"So your holidays haven't been so bad after all?" said Colonel Broke to his boy, whom he had accompanied on the first stage of his journey towards England, when the Harrow vacation came to an end. There were still a few minutes before the express started, and father and son were walking up and down the platform of the big central station, two hours out of Badwiesen, arm-in-arm.

"No, not half bad," Gavin was obliged to admit; "but that was thanks to Miss Anne, not to Germany! I say, father, couldn't you get her anyhow to come over to Broke when I'm home in the summer, and keep house for us? A fellow ought to have a home where he can ask other fellows, and if there isn't any lady—Oh, I know—I didn't mean—nothing could be jollier than you always are, father," squeezing the Colonel's arm affectionately, and dimly conscious that he might have wounded him, or have sounded unmindful of his dead mother, "but if you could persuade Miss Anne to come over to England during the 'long,' I know she'd like it, for I was telling her about Broke the other day, and she said she'd like to see it awfully!"

"There's Miss Severne," said the Colonel smiling, but treating the question quite seriously.

"Whew! so there is! I suppose they wouldn't separate? Well," heroically, "we must have her too; there's plenty of room at Broke, and you can order a lot of newspapers!" and with this, Gavin took his seat in the train, and was presently borne away westward, leaning out of the window, and shouting his last commands to his father, "Get her if you can!"

"I will," muttered the Colonel, marching across the station, to find the Badwiesen train.

A couple of hours later Colonel Broke, hastening through the Kurgarten on his way to the Severnes' house, where he expected to find his little girl, came upon a sight which strangely fitted in with the musings which had occupied him since his parting with Gavin.

His thoughts had run upon the past, and the future—the past, a short married life with his cousin Clara, who had proved unable to stand the Indian climate, and had brought home her children and died herself before her husband could rejoin her in England—a sad little episode in his toilsome Indian life, over which, however, he did not pretend to grieve very passionately, for cousin Clara had not proved herself more of a helpmeet than the average semi-invalidish Indian lady.

The future—one big difficulty, beginning with, going on with, and ending with the children. Gavin was already beginning to feel the want of a lady at Broke. What little Molly might feel the want of, as time went on, and perhaps be unable to express, the Colonel could not bear to think. And for himself—a vision of someone of his own generation to be his companion after this interminable eighteen months spent alone with the children—to give him counsel and support, and to sympathise and make plain where he blundered or hesitated.

"Yes, I will get her if I can," said Henry Broke, striding up to the seat where Miss Anne was working at her embroidery, and little Molly leaned with both arms on her lap, listening to a fairy tale.

"But why didn't the Princess fly away with the Prince in the carriage drawn by white doves?" Molly demanded.

"Because she had her work to do; and people can't always go away and do what they like. Molly, here's your father; run and ask him what news of Gavin." And Miss Anne rose up hastily, for she was shy of telling her stories before any grown-up person.

Colonel Broke caught his little girl and set her on his shoulder. "It is time for this young woman to have her tea, and I am going to take her back to Elizabeth. Will you wait for me here five minutes, Miss Severne? I will not be longer, and there is something I want to consult you about."

Miss Anne returned placidly enough to her embroidery on the seat under the magnolia tree. She wondered in what way her advice could be of any value to the gentleman, and concluded that he must be thinking of changing his hotel, or perhaps of giving up the water-cure which, in a desultory fashion, he was trying for a rheumatic arm. When he came back she made room for him on the seat beside her, and politely folding up her work, waited for him to speak.

But apparently this was the difficulty. Colonel Broke leant forward and kicked the gravel with the toe of his boot; leant back and stared at Miss Anne's ear and the wave of light brown hair which was plaited smoothly behind it; and presently, by turning impatiently round in his corner of the seat, met her eyes fixed full upon him, with the unspoken "Well, what is it?" looking out of their innocent depths.

"Anne, I want you to marry me," said he, leaning towards her. "I know I am asking you very suddenly; but I don't think we need beat about the bush, like a boy and girl of eighteen. You know what men are; so I daresay you have formed a very just estimate of what I am like. And you know the children. You are the only woman I have ever seen that I would ask to come and be a mother to Gavin and Molly; but I know it will not only be to their advantage, but the greatest delight that I could give them. As for myself, I can't tell you what you will be to me! I would rather try and tell

you how happy I will make you—how happy you will make us all, if you will come back with us to Broke. Will you think of it, dear Anne?"

All this time the Colonel kept his eyes on her face; and gradually, as the meaning of his words came to her, Anne's blue eyes filled with tears, then dropped, and two large tears splashed on to her lap.

It was then that Colonel Broke ventured to take the slender white hand that lay ungloved upon her work, and Anne did not withdraw it, though she felt very foolish and shy, and longed for Sydney to come and tell her what to do. But Sydney was, presumably, in the reading-room, as her wont was at five o'clock in the afternoon; and when Anne murmured something about her sister, Colonel Broke said gravely that it was a matter for them alone to settle: if Anne would give him her answer, he would go at once to Miss Severne and beg for her approval; or if she had been taken too much by surprise, he would ask for her decision to-morrow; but in either case he wished her to follow the dictates of her own heart.

Perhaps Colonel Broke scented Miss Severne's contempt of matrimony, and feared its effect upon his plan; or perhaps, with the fastidiousness of a lover—though he disclaimed all sentimentalities as unsuitable to a widower of fifty—he wanted Anne to give herself to him without even discussing the pros and cons of the affair with her only sister. Be that as it may, his determination and resolute bearing had the same effect on his companion as her sister's masterfulness. Miss Anne agreed to consider the matter until next day, and almost promised to do so without taking Sydney into counsel; and the look which she gave the Colonel at parting, when he held her hand and forced her eyes to meet his, sent him away with a smile and a pleasant feeling of security as to what that decision would be.

Some feeling of disingenuousness towards her sister drove Miss Anne into the little salon of their apartment directly she had taken off her bonnet, though she would have far preferred to sit awhile in her own room, facing the wonderful proposition which Colonel Broke had just made her. She had just enough fear of her elder sister to make her anxious to avoid any action that might provoke criticism on this particular occasion; and ordinarily it was not her custom to retire to her room after a stroll in the gardens.

Had either sister been in her normal frame of mind, she must have noticed something unusual in the behaviour of the other. Miss Severne had not been out to the reading-room, but was sitting in the full glare of the April sunshine which filled the little salon; and though the warm rays fell upon her, and the room seemed close and oppressively airless to Miss Anne, the elder lady turned with a shiver to greet her, dropping some papers as she did so into the old-fashioned rosewood desk which she had been ransacking.

"You are late," she said querulously; "coffee has been ready for

half-an-hour, and is undrinkably cold now. And how hot your cheeks look," she went on in a fault-finding tone which was unusual, and almost made Miss Anne fancy that her secret had somehow preceded her.

She put up her hands to her cheeks in a deprecating way: "This room is very warm after the outside air."

"Warm!" caught up Miss Severne; "you must be feverish if you find it warm. I shouldn't wonder if you have caught something, Anne, rushing about in the way you do with those children, when you know very well you are not able for it. I shall be thankful when they are all gone, and you settle down again. What is the good of my having given up my whole life for you, if you are going to sacrifice yours for the first strangers you fall in with? I begin to think that I have had all my work for nothing."

Miss Anne was thunderstruck. This was a fatal beginning to the explanation which she had hoped by slow degrees to make to her sister; she could not even guess at the feelings which were working in Miss Sydney's mind, or refer to its real cause this unprovoked attack; so she silently set herself to pour out the lukewarm coffee, and carried her sister's cup round to her in as good an imitation of her usual manner as she could muster, but her hand shook and she put the cup down awkwardly, dropping the little sugar biscuit that went with it on to Miss Severne's lap.

"I know you are going to be ill!" and Miss Severne snatched her warm fingers in a clutch that was singularly sharp and cold. Then to Anne's utter amazement the elder lady caught her breath in a strange way and suddenly burst into a fit of sobbing, leaning her grey head and trim muslin cap against her sister's breast.

If Anne was thunderstruck before, the whole world went round with her now. She had never, in all their many years of close companionship, seen Miss Sydney's tears, and she was as ignorant of their cause as of any means of allaying them. She could only kneel beside her sister, with a piteous white face from whence all the roses had fled, and put her arms round her, calling her all sorts of pet names as if they were children together again, and as if she were the elder, the consoler, the comforter, as Sydney had ever been.

Presently Miss Severne's tears stopped as suddenly as they had begun; she sat upright, pushing Anne gently back, though she still knelt beside her chair with one arm about her, and said with a tremulous laugh: "I'm better now, Anne; I am sorry I frightened you so; I did not know I was going to be so foolish. The truth is, it is I, not you, who am a little out of sorts; but that fit of crying has done me a world of good, though it has made you as white as a ghost! There, drink up your coffee—I don't believe you have ever seen me cry before, Anne, which is a good deal to say of more than forty years together. But as I said, it has done me good—and done you good, too, indirectly, for I was very cross to you just now, and

somehow the tears have washed all that away. We haven't often been cross to each other in our forty years, have we?"

"Never," said Miss Anne, fervently, leaning closer to her sister, and wondering dimly if this strange day had any further surprises in store. "Never, Sydney, and I don't think we shall begin now. But what makes you feel upset? Have you—has anything——?" She stopped short, hardly knowing what to ask.

"I've been an old fool," Miss Severne declared stoutly, in something of her ordinary manner. "To tell you the truth, I've been exhuming a ghost"—and her hand felt for the old desk which stood close by. "I thought I shouldn't mind looking it in the face after a quarter of a century, but I'm not as brave as I fancied I was, and this has been the result, I'm ashamed to say."

"A ghost of what?" faltered Miss Anne.

"A ghost of a lover," Miss Sydney answered. "Are you surprised, Anne? I don't suppose you ever imagined that I knew what a lover was, but I had one once—and a handsome one too—only—" and here she laughed constrainedly, and as if to give the conversation a less serious turn—"you see it came to nothing."

"Why did it come to nothing?" Anne asked. She felt a queer distaste of this story, which had come to light so inopportunately like a shadow to that happy scene that she had taken part in an hour before; yet she was impelled to question her sister, if only out of that sympathy against which Miss Sydney had steeled herself so long.

"Oh, for various reasons." Miss Severne's reply was evasive and halting. "It was before we left Dumbridge, of course. He was a doctor who had the practice for a few months; the last year you were at school. Then he went away to Edinburgh, and he wrote and asked if I would—if I would go there too. I turned up two or three letters written just at that time, when I was hunting through my old desk for our Paraguay Coupons to send to Mr. Taper to-morrow. He is anxious about those Paraguays, I know; he doesn't think much of their soundness."

"But why didn't you go to Edinburgh, Sydney?" persisted Miss Anne, putting her head down on her sister's shoulder, out of sight, and softly stroking her hand.

"Because, as I told you, I had other duties. Our father died that year, and I had your health to think of; you could not have stood a home in the North, and—and—we could do better together on the Continent than anywhere separate in England. I'm sure I've never regretted it for a moment," said Miss Severne bravely, giving Anne's hand a tight squeeze; "and I don't think you have either. We've been more to each other than most husbands and wives, and I trust we shall have many a year together still: the chain that holds us is not likely to break now." And she turned and kissed her sister's cheek.

"The chain that binds us!"

The words dropped like lead upon Anne's heart. In a flash she saw the future stretching out before her—wide, empty, silent, as a long foreign road, down which she and Sydney were to pass together, two single, solitary women: a road that would never lead to an English home, to the honour and pride of a good man's love, to the kisses of little children. There was another future that she dared not look upon—Sydney had had a glimpse of it, too, five-and-twenty years back, and had turned resolutely from it for her sake. Miss Anne was silent a moment, then she took up her end of the chain without a backward glance.

"You ought to go and lie down for an hour," she said, decisive towards her sister for the first time in her life. "See, here is Kätchen with the evening letters—one for you—from Mr. Taper, I believe; you can take it with you and read it in your room, and I will come and tuck you up, and call you when supper is ready."

But Miss Severne, with a quick resumption of her usual dignity and business habits, was cutting open the lawyer's letter with her little Swiss paper-knife. She was standing beside the table whence Kätchen was removing the untasted coffee. "The Paraguays, Anne!" she said in a high, unnatural voice. Then she swung forward and fell—stricken by paralysis.

When Colonel Broke called next morning to ask for Miss Anne, he encountered Kätchen on the outer landing, ready to answer all inquiries and to prevent either visitors or noise penetrating further.

"Miss Severne was very ill; Miss Anne could see nobody; there was a hospital nurse expected every moment, and if the gracious gentleman would leave a card ——"

Plainly Kätchen did not want him to remain parleying there, and he went away very sorrowful, all the pleasant hopes of yesterday dashed and shaken. And by-and-by came a little note from Miss Anne, who, in the midst of her trouble, had remembered that he was waiting for his answer, begging kindly but firmly to decline his offer. "She and her sister," she said, "were too old to part now, and she believed she was doing her best for everyone in deciding to remain his very sincere friend, ANNE SEVERNE."

Colonel Broke did not realise how much his heart was set upon having Anne Severne for his wife till he returned to Badwiesen a few weeks later and found that the ladies had departed. A sudden feverish attack, which had left Molly fractious and pale, had driven him back to England to establish the child at the seaside, but that done he had found himself more lonely and at a loss than ever. The Badwiesen villa seemed the only spot on earth that at all represented home to him, and in spite of his oft-repeated assertions that "once he got to England again he should know where he was well off, and stop there," he retraced his journey as quickly as possible, to

climb the well-known stone stairs in vain, and learn from a communicative Putz-frau on the landing that the English ladies were gone.

"Die Kranke? Ach, du lieber! There was no recovery for her; her wits were completely gone, but the other, Das Schwesterchen, she was a heaven's angel, if ever there were one; she nursed her night and day, for they could not long afford to keep the hospital sister; and now she had taken her away in a chair to the mountains, and the furniture and the good English beds, and the pictures and everything had been sold to Herr Vogler, the house-agent, to pay the ladies' debts before they went away."

"To pay their debts?" the Colonel repeated, as if he did not understand.

"Lieber! yes," Frau Muller went on, delighted to gossip; "illness is so great an expense, and Fraulein Anna spared nothing for her sister, not even the great doctor from Cassel, that cost, Frau Muller had heard, a hundred mark an hour; as for herself, she thought that when once the sick one was stricken it was useless to take bread out of the mouths of the living."

"But the ladies were comfortably off," interrupted Colonel Broke. He did not like discussing such a subject with the charwoman, but he had no choice; the information he must have, and she could not be a common woman who spoke of Anne Severne as a "heaven's angel."

"Ah, then the gracious gentleman had not heard what it was that caused poor Fraulein Severne's *Schlag*? It was no less a thing than the loss of more than half their income. Frau Muller had had it from Kätchen, the maid, that Fraulein Anna had cried and kissed her, when she paid her wages (such wages too! Kätchen said she would always live with English people in future!), and had told her that she could not keep a servant any longer, because the money that came from America had all disappeared. That was the meaning of the stroke, and of selling the furniture, and leaving the town, natürlich!"

Colonel Broke stemmed this torrent of talk at last with a two mark piece, and came away with the Severnes' address in his pocket-book, and with a firmer determination than ever to follow Miss Anne to the world's end in his heart.

There is a sunshiny, white country road just outside Geneva, which leads to a little suburban Etablissement de Bains. One afternoon Colonel Broke made his way along this unfrequented Chemin Châtillon, glancing with his eyeglasses sharply from side to side at the garden gateposts, whose numbers were half-hidden by dusty wisteria and drooping laburnum seed-pods.

Thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, and then, no nineteen, as might have been expected, but a hiatus altogether, a bit of oak-paling and a fresh start of tiny, retiring country houses buried in creepers, calling themselves "Mon Repos," "Mon Désir," "Colabri," with no numbers at all.

The Englishman turned round with an impatient exclamation—was he never to get to his journey's end? And there, not twenty yards from him, on the opposite path, was his journey's end coming to him.

Anne Severne, with her arms full of some heavy books, her eyes cast down, and her face, that was sweeter even than he remembered it, unconscious of his scrutiny. He had a moment's time to notice that she was older, sadder, slower in her movements, as she toiled along the shingly path with her burden of books; then his shadow fell across her, and as she looked up he took a great parcel out of her hands without a word, and turned to walk beside her.

"You see I have come after you," he said gently, and without looking at her; "both of us had our hands so full that last week at Badwiesen that we could not attend to our own affairs. Now I have taken Molly to England, and have come back to speak to you.—How is your sister?" abruptly changing the subject.

"No better," faltered Miss Anne; "worse, I fear. I hoped a great deal from the waters here, and the air is said to be specially beneficial for—for cases like hers—but she does not know me, Colonel Broke, and she cannot speak or ——" there was no need to finish the sentence.

"And how are you yourself?" the Colonel asked.

"Oh, I'm very well," Miss Anne answered hurriedly; "there is so much to be done that I have no time to be other than well," but her slow, tired step, and the sudden rush of tears to her eyes at his kind voice belied her words.

"And what are all these books?"

"Some for study, and some for a little venture in translating that I am making."

"Do you find time for study and translating when you are nursing your sister? Are you not overdoing it, Miss Anne?"

"I think—you don't understand, perhaps," she began falteringly. "You know that we are worse off than we used to be, owing to the Paraguay failure in the spring, and I have some pupils here in Geneva, as well as some translating to do for a French publishing firm—indeed, it is not only for the help it brings in, but now that I have lost my dear Sydney's companionship, it gives me a kind of interest; it is better than ——"

"For better, for worse," quoted Colonel Broke irrelevantly, stopping short, and wheeling round so as to face his companion. "Look here, Miss Anne, don't you think that Molly and Gavin and I would make better companions for you than wretched little Swiss children or musty old books? As long as your sister and you were all in all to each other, I felt that Miss Severne was a formidable rival, whose prior claim I hardly ventured to dispute; but now that her mind has gone—forgive me, Anne, but I must speak plainly for all our sakes. She is your care still, but not your companion, and you must not be

allowed to sacrifice yourself to an imaginary duty. If you care for me a little, and for my children, as I think you did in the gardens at Badwiesen that day, let us be married here, dear Anne, without loss of time, and then we will take your sister back to Broke and make her as happy as we can."

"She gave up everything once for me," said Miss Anne feebly.

"And now you have to give up a great many things for her," the Colonel answered cheerfully: "your independence, your pride (eh? Anne), your life on the Continent, your translating!" and with that all the heavy German books tumbled down in the dust, and as there was not a soul visible along all the wide road, Colonel Broke took both Anne Severne's hands and kissed her.

Anne Broke always feels that in force of character she has fallen lamentably short of her sister Sydney's standard in marrying the Colonel. She wonders sometimes if Sydney understands this new combination as she sits smiling, well cared for, impassive, in her invalid chair, under the elms on the lawn at Broke, or by the library window in winter time. Anne's life is so full of interests, of the affairs of her husband and step-children, her household and the parish, she thanks God daily for her happy, busy lot, with an undiminished astonishment that she was chosen, and Sydney, so manifestly her superior, left. But everything is an astonishment nowadays. Molly sits on the step of Aunt Sydney's chair by the hour together, talking to her in a grave, patronising strain about rabbits and kittens, and such like small deer, and Miss Severne looks up at her with pleased, eager eyes, and is quite happy.



SONNET.

THE whole day long chased by the eager sun,
From yellow morn, the fleet young hours fly,
O'er dewy mountain-tops, up silent sky;
Down o'er the western hills they swift speed on,
Still seeming within reach and never won.
Behind the hot sun presses breathlessly,
But fresh as at their dawn, o'er the cool sea
He sees them glide, then drop down one by one;
He slacks the reins, he lifts his fevered head,
Throws back his humid locks—then casts a glance,
Embracing all the height and vast expanse
Of heaving seas, broad earth and burning air:
One look of desolation and despair,
For that day gone—for those fair hours fled.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

FAIR NORMANDY.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



CAEN.

THE interest of Caen is martial, as well as ecclesiastical and historical. Above the town rises the castle, which, though a scene of greatness and excitement in the old days, is now converted into homely barracks, where the soldiers pass a sleepy existence. The only personage who is apparently very much awake is the sentry. Woe unto you if you attempt to pass through the sacred portals. He charges you, and rudely commands a retreat. If you hesitate, he looks at his bayonet as if hesitating whether to run you through at once or give you yet another chance for life. On the whole, as discretion is the better part of valour, you retire across the drawbridge.

One regrets the restriction, for the castle commands the town, and the view must be magnificent. You notice the strong walls flanked with towers, which look as if they would defy time itself. And they have done no less, for the castle was built by William the Conqueror, the fortifications were enlarged and strengthened by Henry I. of England, and rebuilt by Louis XII. and Francis I. The donjon, in which many a prisoner has sighed out his weary existence, was happily destroyed by the Convention: and the days of donjons, inquisitions and torture-chambers we may well hope have departed for ever.

From the upper terrace, to which you are allowed access, the view is remarkable. The town lies below you, and though not sufficiently elevated to command it, you see before you a grouping of ancient houses and gabled roofs, which have quite a mediæval look about them. The towers and steeples of Caen rise on all sides, conspicuous amongst all the beautiful spire of St. Peter's.

But one of the best views is to be obtained in the grounds of the

hospital. When the lay-sister has conducted you through some of the wards: and you have admired the remarkable order and cleanliness of every room, the care taken of the sick, the contented expression of those not actually in pain; when you have noticed the quiet bearing of the nuns as they turn their faces to the wall during your presence, and you wonder whether they are old or young, beautiful or plain: the lay-sister conducts you into the grounds.

They are imposing; for they date from the time when the building was a nunnery inhabited by noble ladies. Tall trees cast their shadows athwart broad avenues; moving, restless shadows, as the wind and the sun glint and whisper through the leaves. You tread upon chequered lights and shades. To the right is a small labyrinth, and through its not very intricate windings the sister leads the way. The view from the summit is extensive. Caen lies before you at a little distance. Some of the churches stand out boldly, the steeples rising heavenwards. They are so numerous that you might call it a city of steeples or spires—has not Coventry received the same title?—but in Caen they are as diversified as numerous.

You see the Castle rising proudly, and even catch the sun glancing upon the steel bayonet of the rude sentry as he paces to and fro. You trace the windings of many a narrow, many an ancient street, some of which are dilapidated and dirty enough to daunt even an antiquarian. You catch a glimpse of the church of St. Nicholas—a church which had interested us so much before we looked upon it from the maze of the Hôtel Dieu.

It was not far from the Abbaye aux Hommes. The gates were open and we had entered only an hour ago. It is now desecrated, and converted into a hay-store for the cavalry, and the effect was curious. Beautiful pillars and arches were half buried, half lost in hay. The aisles were full of it. Everything was crumbling to decay. Some of the pillars were broken and the capitals lay where they had fallen. In the space surrounding the church, hay carts reposed upon their shafts, and before the fine west doorway, also crumbling and dilapidated, the artist from the Hôtel Royale was painfully seated upon an inverted tub, almost as ruined as the church itself, diligently sketching.

We had thoroughly enjoyed the visit, and lingered and gazed, until H. C., attacked by a fit of sneezing, declared himself in danger of catching hay-fever.

All this we recalled from the maze, and our very pretty and interesting lay-sister pointed out many spots which were as yet unknown to us, whilst she talked very pleasantly, and was evidently much taken with H. C. It was of course mutual, and presently he put a question to her which I feared bordered on indiscretion.

"Do you intend to take the veil?" he asked, a very tender light in his eyes and a certain anxiety in his tones.

"Oh, no," she laughed. "It is not my vocation. I could never live the life. But why do you ask, monsieur?"

H. C. looked relieved. "I thought it would be a pity," he replied. "You are too good to waste your life as a nun. You ought to go out into the world and marry, and be very happy, and make some good fellow very happy also."

The sister blushed at this unexpected compliment, and I began to think it was time we moved on.

"The nuns do not waste their lives," she said, half laughing, half in reproof. "They are good and holy women; in some cases too good for this world. If I were as good, perhaps I too could become cloistered; as it is, I know I should regret it. But as to marriage"—she blushed and laughed again—"I never think of that either. I don't intend to marry. Married people are always full of cares and worry; and husbands and wives get tired of each other. Oh, it is not at all romantic. I have never yet seen anyone that I could fall in love with."

"Not one?" murmured H. C. "Do you not believe in love at first sight?"

She spoke in broken English, with the prettiest accent possible. She was pale and dainty and refined-looking; moved softly and gracefully as her feet lightly trod the ground; in her neat and becoming lay-sister's dress, the clear white cap set well upon her head, the long thin lappets falling behind, she looked very interesting. It was impossible for anyone so susceptible as H. C. to escape; and there was really some excuse for him. Only, he is as inconstant as susceptible, and is no sooner "off with the old love than he is on with the new."

Below ran the river. We could trace the outline of the harbour, with its little forest of masts, a few vessels moving to and fro. In the distance one saw the confluence of the streams, and yet further away the broad sea, on which the sun shimmered and glanced.

Near the canal pathway was the *Maison des Gendarmes*, a curious old tower, built in the reign of Louis XII. It looks as though it might once have formed part of a fortress, with its battlemented walls and towers, but was built by Gerard de Nollent as a mere civil residence. This tower is all that remains of the structure, but its outlines may be gathered. The enclosure forms nothing but an untidy fold-yard, strewn with straw, through which cattle wend their weary way to and from their stables.

The tower takes its name from two armed men in stone ornamenting the summit. Until late years it was possible to mount to the platform, and look down upon the world from this little elevation; but the stone stairs have crumbled and fallen, and the rickety old doorway is wisely kept locked. The walls of the tower are curiously decorated with medallions: the heads of emperors, etc.; and a fine grated window is still in good preservation. It is a singular and interesting monument. Before it runs the canal, with its quiet banks and whispering trees, and the passing boats form almost all the life and movement upon which those stone figures now gaze. For the

glory of the place has departed, and on its lintels you may read the sad word Ichabod. He who raised the building lies low, motionless as his stone effigies.

These details we had remarked a few hours ago, when we had visited the tower; they were not to be seen from the maze. But we could trace the outlines, and follow the windings of the river far down the land, until all was lost in a general effect of distant sea.

The view was striking, and H. C. would have gone on contemplating it for any length of time, though its attractive feature to him was near at hand, not remote; but the conversation was growing personal and dangerous, and I marched him off in the very middle of a sentence in which he was asking the sister whether she was fond of poetry. It was long before he forgave me; for quite two hours he put on a melancholy air; and once, when I asked whether we should visit a certain spot before or after dinner, all the answer I received was a deep-drawn sigh and a murmured, "Quite too charming."

But it is more the surroundings of Caen than Caen itself that I would bring before you to-day. For Caen has many excursions, and a week or two might profitably be spent in taking them; making Caen your head-quarters, and coming back at night to the atmosphere of ancient monasteries and beautiful churches, and all the charm of gabled houses, and high, red-tiled roofs, with their dormer windows; to say nothing of the merits of the Hôtel de la Place Royale. It is at night, too, that these ancient houses and churches are especially interesting; when the moon rises, round as a shield, and throws her silvery light upon a sleeping world, revealing all outlines with such eerie and quaint effect.

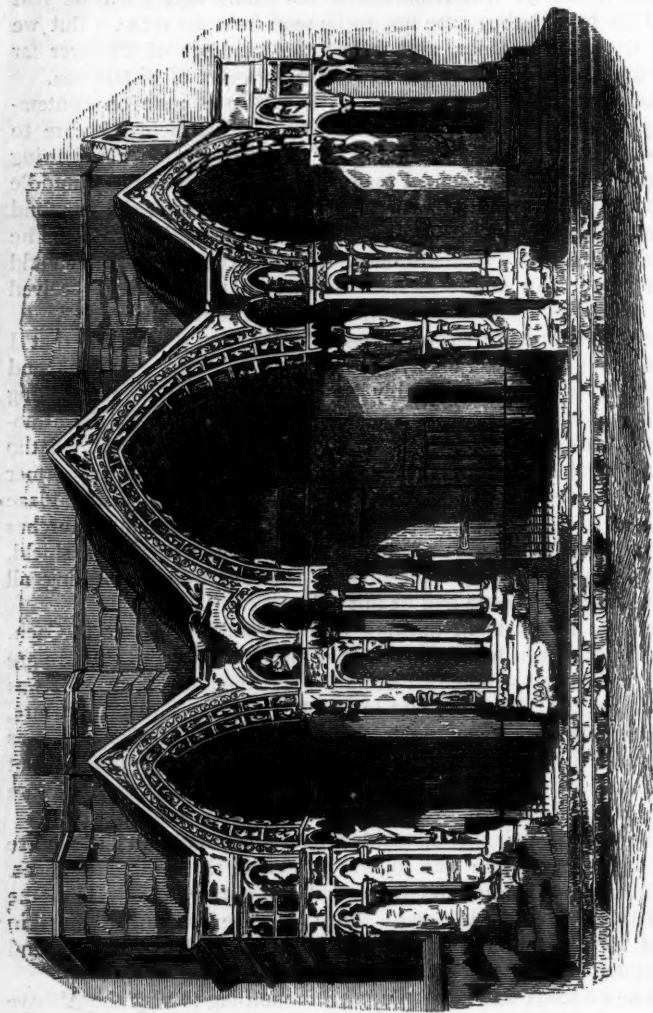
We were fortunate in meeting with a wonderful driver in Caen. We had never seen his like before, and never shall again. There are certain things and people that cannot repeat themselves; and he was one of them. Like the mould in which a genius is cast by nature, its purpose served, the form is shattered for ever. This man was indeed like Jehu, and drove furiously. His victoria was modest, but the horse, like the driver, was matchless. The man was quite aware of the fact and very proud of it.

"Would you believe," he said, "that this wonderful little horse was condemned? He was ill, and supposed to be quite done for. But I saw his merits, and persuaded the *patron* to buy him—he secured him for an old song. Since then he has earned his skin stuffed full of gold. He will run for ten hours like lightning and never turn a hair."

All he said was verified. We left one morning to visit the Abbaye d'Ardennes. He tore down the streets in a way that alarmed us, but which the people of Caen seemed accustomed to, for they took it as a matter of course. We were soon on the outskirts of the town, had passed the canal and the locks, and turned into a country road. The trees seemed to fly past us; the horse wanted neither whip nor

urging. All the driver had to do was to sit on his box and hold the reins, and occasionally check the ardour of the little animal.

The flat country was pretty and fertile, without possessing strongly-

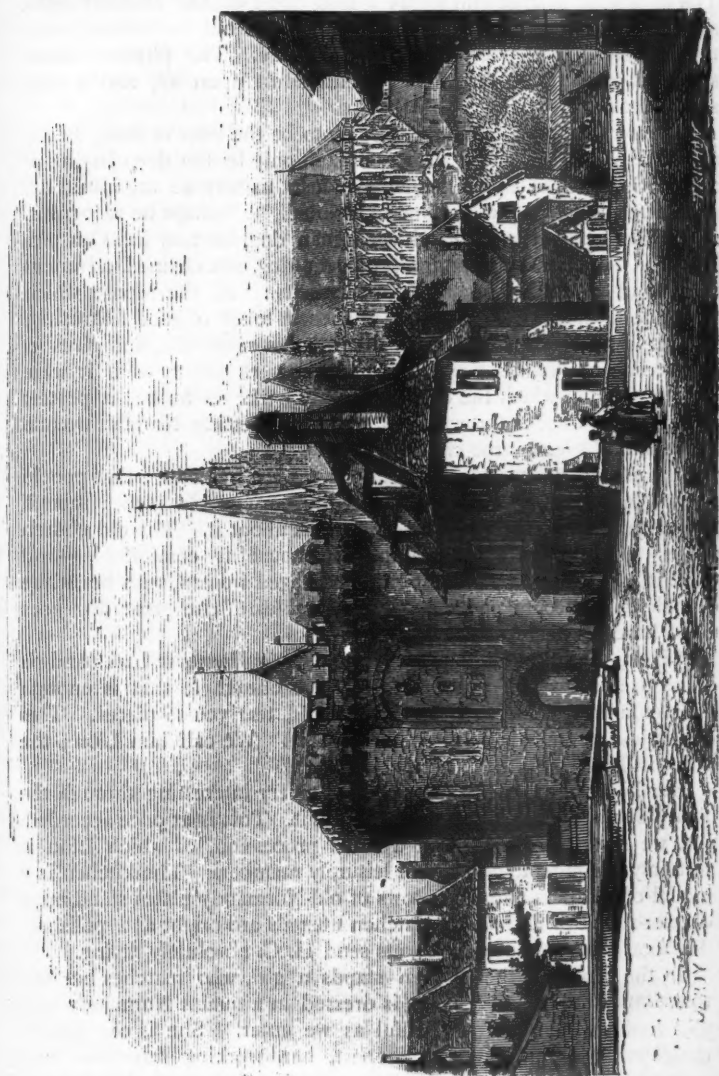


WEST DOORWAY OF CHARTRES CATHEDRAL.

marked features. We travelled at such speed that before long we found ourselves at the old Abbey, well rewarded for our pains.

It is now nothing but a farm. The monastery buildings have been turned into a dwelling-house, and the church itself is used as a

barn and hay-store. The building is gothic, and dates back to the thirteenth century, with fourteenth century portals.



PORTE GUILLAUME, CHARTRES.

The whole forms a very striking and beautiful picture, and the air of partial ruin about it is very effective. The outlines and proportions of the church are extremely fine. The farm buildings are low,

but in good preservation. It is all a strange mixture of the sacred and secular, and one regrets that it has fallen away from its destiny. The enclosure is large and forms a fold-yard; all the ordinary signs and tokens of farm life blend, or rather stand out in contrast, with these ecclesiastical outlines and atmosphere. The physical atmosphere is perfect. A bright sun shines down upon all, and a blue sky is above all.

At our moment of entering, it seems to be the hour of rest. Peace and quietness reign, and a silence, broken only by the deep baying of a huge dog chained to his kennel, who asks us why we are intruding, and seems anything but hospitably inclined. Perhaps he recognises us for Englishmen, and, though a Norman dog, he may have his prejudices. Another huge and magnificent dog, not chained, advances towards us with slow and stately movements: "all the repose which marks good breeding;" he shakes hands in token of good fellowship, holding up his paw with all the dignity of a small lion, and gives us a welcome out of his beautiful brown eyes as plainly as if it were spoken. Upon which the chained enemy barks so furious a protest that the farm door is thrown open and an interesting Norman woman appears, and silences the canine battery.

She comes up to us and tells us we are welcome; that people—especially the English—often visit the curious old place; though for her part she sees nothing very curious about it. The old church makes a capital store-house, and the house is comfortable—and there it is. She is a picture of a middle-aged woman, with her white cap, short petticoats, and neatly-turned ankles. The great dog goes up to have his head patted.

"He is large, but good," she declares. "He never barks and is of no use as a watch dog. But we have one there that is enough for any farm. If he were loose he would tear you to pieces. This one is just as amiable as the other is fierce. We call him Lion; the other is Tiger: and he is a veritable tiger."

Her kitchen, or "house-place," looks very interesting through the open door, and we ask permission to see it. This is at once accorded, and we cross the fold-yard in a small procession, of which Lion is certainly the most dignified and leisurely member. The kitchen is a model of neatness and art. Rows of old Normandy plates stand upon dresser-shelves; and all the kitchen utensils are bright and polished. The brass dairy-pans and buckets send H. C. absolutely raving.

In the centre of the kitchen stands a girl, who matches her surroundings wonderfully. She is dressed in a quaint Normandy cap, and looks very shy and bashful as we enter. She is our guide's daughter. They are plain, honest, hard-working farm-folk, and nothing more. But in their class you often find much that is interesting to study; rugged characters, perhaps, but with fine, bold outlines, that take a very simple view of life—a view that from its very simplicity is frequently large-minded and comprehensive. You

occasionally find these characters amongst the peasantry, though perhaps more in Brittany than in Normandy.

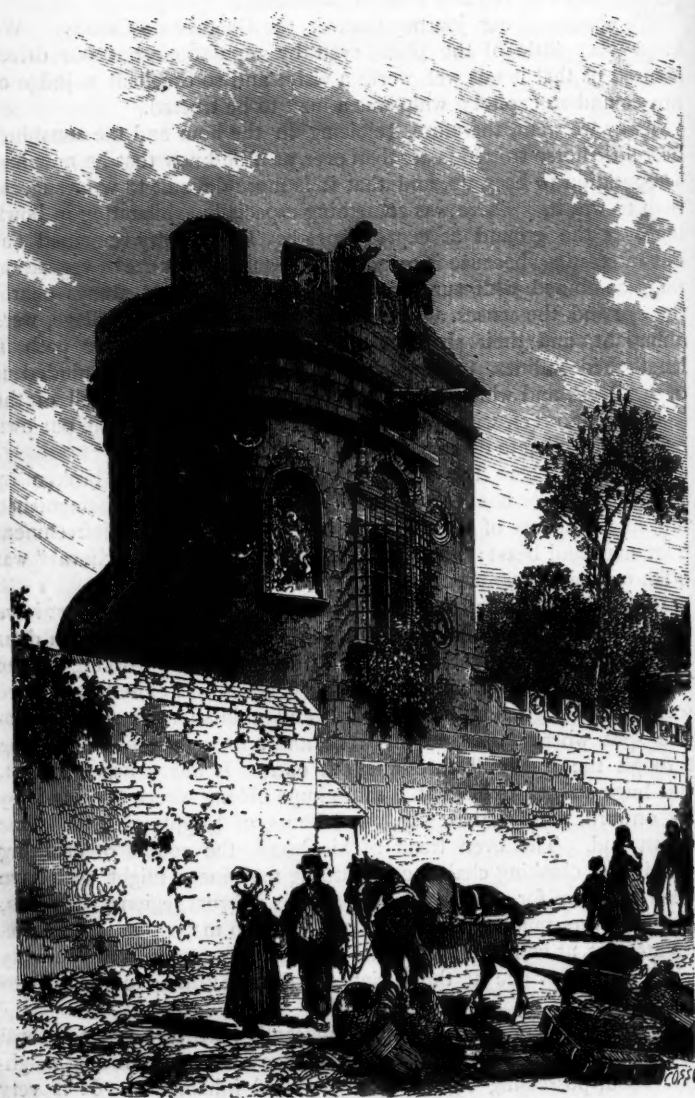
We continued our journey towards the Château de Creully. We knew very little of the place, even by reputation, but our driver assured us that it was well worth a visit; and so excellent a judge of horses and so capital a whip was a man to be trusted.

Away we went, therefore, rejoicing in the hour and the sunshine. The little horse trotted faster than ever, as if he knew that he now had a reputation to keep up, and that it is more difficult to wear success than to win it. There was something especially exhilarating in bowling over the ground at express speed. The country remained flat but interesting, because it possessed a certain luxuriance of vegetation, that, combined with sunshine and blue skies, must always charm the eye and the senses. Trees, well grown and full of foliage, were abundant, and their shadows occasionally fell across our path in lengthened outlines. We passed between hedges that reminded us of England, and which, in spring, we felt sure would be full of the same wild flowers, with perhaps others added to them that our own hedges and climate do not know.

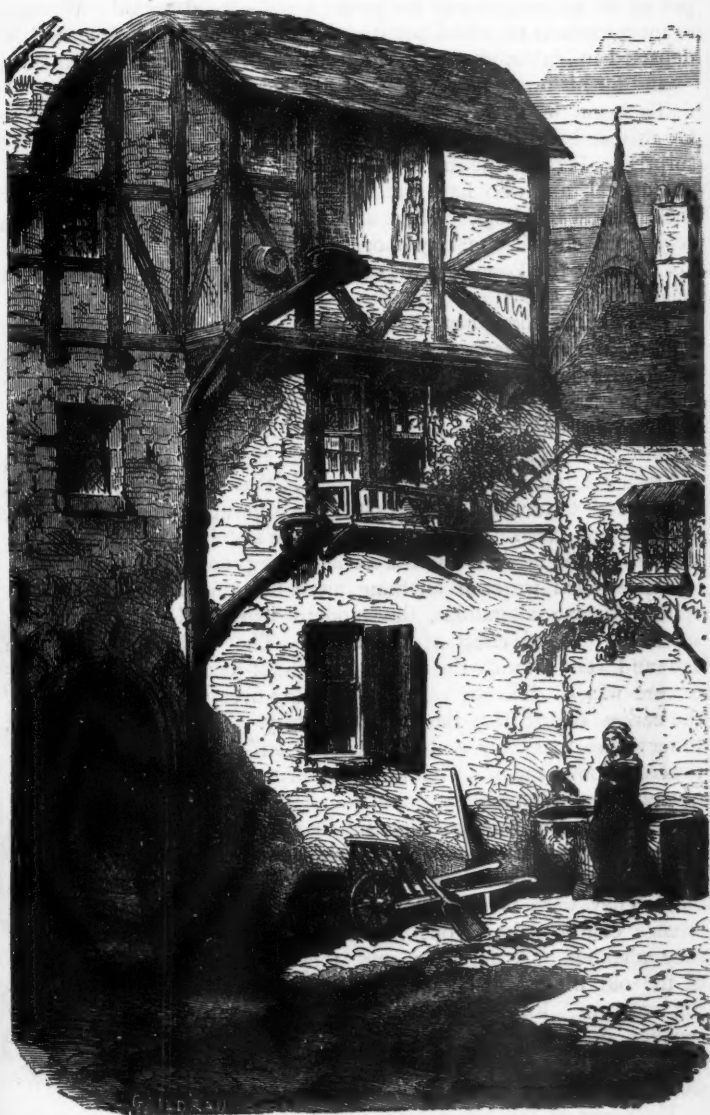
Here and there the monotony of the journey was broken by a quiet village or hamlet. Curious and primitive signs distinguished the small houses of those who plied trades or provided refreshment "for man and beast:" and the "*Ici on loge à pied et à cheval*" was often conspicuous.

One village especially seemed deserted. Its inhabitants must have been all sleeping, or all at Caen on a pilgrimage—though Caen does not, like Chartres, possess a Black Virgin—or away working in the fields, earning their daily bread. Every house was closed, and there was neither sign nor sound of life and animation excepting from one spot, where men were at work, and a horse was literally going through the treadmill, threshing out corn. It was a curious sight, this huge animal upon a still more huge oblong wheel, turning it by an onward march, that, like the labours of Sisyphus, never came to an end. The even tread of his hoofs, the sound of creaking wood and clanking chains and rattling machinery might well have been mistaken for work going on in the infernal regions. It was, however, very much above board and open to inspection; there was no attempt at concealment; but it seemed to approach very nearly within the province of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

We passed away from it all, and presently reached the small town of Creully, a place of some little importance to the surrounding neighbourhood, possessing eight or nine hundred inhabitants. It is very prettily situated upon rising ground; its base washed by the waters of the small but picturesque river Seulles. For all rivers are more or less beautiful, and all waters add immeasurably to the charm of landscape.



TOUR DES GENDARMES.



COURTYARD IN THE HOUSE OF CHARLOTTE CORDAY, CAEN.

Here our driver announced that, with our permission, he should put up for an hour, to rest his horse: a well-earned reward. We were to meet again at the chief, possibly the only hotel in the place, and he departed in high spirits for the delectation of his fiery untamed steed—and for his own.

To begin with, we found a remarkable and interesting church. Of this we had had no notice, and it came upon us as an agreeable surprise. Perhaps the driver was of those to whom architecture does not appeal, and who have yet to learn reverence and admiration for ecclesiastical buildings. There are too many in France to whom the very word church, the very thought of religion, act as defiance to his Holiness the Pope, a red rag to a bull, or a wrong quantity to a scholar.

This church though small, was pure Norman. Encrusted in the wall of the sanctuary were the tombs of Antoine III. of Sillens, and of Antoinette II.; and beneath the church were vaults containing many fragments of tombs still more ancient and interesting.

Near the church we turned in at a small iron gateway, which admitted one to a short, unpretending, not especially well-kept avenue, yet with a suspicion of wildness about it that was very picturesque. At the end, the avenue opened out upon a group of trees and shrubs, and a broad lawn. Beyond this rose the stately château: a strange mixture of the modern and the ancient, the present and the past.

Seldom had we seen anything more beautiful and striking. In spite of some alterations, the modern hand had not in any way spoilt the general effect of the whole. The walls were grey with age and stained with the lichen growth of centuries. The architecture was of different periods spreading over four hundred years, the earliest dating from the twelfth century. Two remarkable round towers rose massively and majestically, and a third, of later date, towered above them. The windows, of various dates, and placed eccentrically, were very picturesque.

We gazed in wonder, thinking that to have missed this would have been to lose one of Normandy's choicest relics of antiquity. Suddenly, two ladies appeared at one of the windows and leaned out. They were dressed in the fashion of the day, and looked in strange contrast, almost out of harmony, with the ancient building they inhabited. A singular picture they made, set in the framework of the old window, its casement decorated with flowers and drooping creepers. Rather would we have seen apparitions dressed in *sacques*, or in ruff and farthingale, hooped skirts and high head-dresses. Or even a quaint Norman costume of the present day would have been acceptable.

Then one of the ladies retired, and we heard a bell ring, and a distant voice screamed "Charlotte!" in a way that rather disturbed the solemn dignity and repose of this ancient building. We wondered whether it was Werner's Charlotte that was being apostro-

phised, and whether a ghost would shortly appear upon the scene. It was venerable enough for any number of ghosts; one of those buildings that are incomplete without its traditional apparition.

"Charlotte" appeared, not at all in the form of she who was wont to cut bread and butter. A decent, middle-aged woman, in ordinary servant's dress, who bade us welcome, and before we had left confided to us the whole history of the place, including her own domestic joys and sorrows. How she was the gardener's wife and had an excellent husband, as husbands went; and how they had one son in whom they were bound up heart and soul. He had never left her apron strings all the days of his life until three months ago, when it was necessary for him to go out in the world to earn his living. So they had apprenticed him to a haberdasher in Bayeux, and they hoped that he would do well and rise in the future. There was his little bed in the corner—pointing to one partly hidden by a screen—he had never even slept out of their room; and now she couldn't herself sleep at night for the emptiness. But, dame! the years will pass, and boys grow into young men, and they couldn't keep them for ever.

All this was said towards the conclusion of our visit, when she had taken us into her little sanctum, to show us photographs which she sold at a certain profit. It was narrated with many sighs and tears, and in tremulous tones; and we wondered whether her boy—her cher Ernest—sufficiently repaid all this wonderful anxiety and love. Probably, for she seemed to think him only "a little lower than the angels;" and if the French youths have no other virtue, they certainly possess that of great reverence and affection for their parents.

But before all this, Charlotte approached and bade us welcome.

We crossed the lawn under the fire of bright eyes from the window above, in no way disconcerted by our presence. A fine Norman archway led into a huge cave or cellar, with magnificent points about it, and every trace of antiquity. An enormous fire-place stood in the corner, at which an ox might have been roasted. It was all given up to modern uses, and casks of cider lay about, and a small braize fire was burning in a small modern stove. The room was partly used as a kitchen, and a Normandy maiden—possibly a second Charlotte—was, not cutting bread and butter, but—oh! that I should have to tell the truth and introduce so vulgar an element into all this refinement of architecture and antiquity—peeling onions. Alas! those fair ladies upstairs probably did not draw the line at onions; garlic was no doubt introduced into the mysteries of the table.

A winding staircase led to the rooms above, only one or two of which were shown. One room, circular in form and quaintly furnished, charmed us. You looked out upon the world through mulioned windows with deep embrasures, and over a small ancient fire-place were the arms of a long past owner.

For this Château de Creully has had many owners, and gone through strange vicissitudes. In point of prestige it has fallen in its old age. It was once one of the most important fortresses in Calvados, has seen martial pageants, much military rule and authority. Its courtyard echoed with the clanking of armour, and the flashing of swords in the sunlight was reflected upon its walls.

Belonging originally to Robert of Gloucester, natural son of Henry I., it changed possessors with the passing ages. At the last revolution it was in the possession of Caen, but unoccupied, neglected and forlorn, though it was for sale no one would buy it. At last an enterprising lady of the honest bourgeoisie of Caen made a ridiculously low offer for it—all this we learned from our excellent driver—something like a thousand pounds; and to her surprise, and no doubt delight, it was accepted: a rare property passed into her possession, and that of her heirs. Probably to-day they have become counts and barons, and write the magic “de” to their names.

From the roof we gazed upon all the extent of territory; not wide, but beautiful. In the adjoining park, rich in trees and shady avenues, a stream for ever runs with a musical sound. There were fair pastures beyond, where the “horned cattle” were quietly grazing, and Charlotte occasionally goes a-milking; “just to keep her hand in, and to remind her of her young days when she was a happy dairymaid and knew nothing of trouble.” The houses of the little town of Creully were just visible; and their red roofs appeared and disappeared through the trees as the wind swayed the branches to and fro. Beyond was the valley of the Seulles; and in the distance, if a winding road had not concealed them, the stately spires of Bayeux Cathedral might have been seen rising towards cloudland.

We lingered long about this beautiful château. H. C. lamented his limitation of power, which prevented him from transporting it bodily to England, by magic word or wand, and exchanging it for his unpretending shooting-box in the wilds of —, where on the one hand you may watch the far-off sea breaking as it were upon the horizon, and on the other you inhale the scent of endless moors on which the grouse run to and fro and have a very happy time of it until, year after year, the ever-rolling stream brings round the twelfth of August.

But we had to leave at last. We could not take up our abode at the old and lonely château, and there was no magician’s wand to transport us over land and sea. We gave it a last, long, very long lingering gaze from the lawn, and thought we had seldom found a more beautiful picture. The windows were all untenanted; the ladies had disappeared. H. C., who in appearance would pass very well for a Spanish troubadour, wished to give them an impromptu serenade by way of farewell—he is rather good at improvising; but with all his virtues, his voice, when raised in song, very much resembles a barrel-organ all out of time and tune; and the per-

formance would have been a base return for the civility shown us. So we departed in silence.

As we passed up the avenue, a sort of French dogcart met us. It contained the fortunate owner of this fair domain, returning from the



CHURCH OF ST. GILLES, CAEN.

"chasse." But the French chasse is a curious thing ; a sort of trifling with edged tools in a drawing-room attire ; a delicate handling of guns, an embroidered game bag, and a shooting at small birds : all very much opposed to the Englishman's ideas of sport.

Our hour was long over, and our driver was at the appointed place,

harnessed and waiting. We gave him every credit for having brought us to Creully, and set off on the homeward journey without further delay.

We had to return the same way; there was no possibility of varying the route without taking an immense round, and for this the day was too far advanced. The sleepy village was deserted as ever; but the horse was still working the treadmill with the same admirable resignation. We rattled down lanes and roads, and flew past trees and hedges. We left the Abbaye d'Ardennes to our right, but did not again enter its portals. The deep baying of Tiger echoed in the distance; evidently he heard us, knew well enough that there was only one descendant of Jehu in Caen to drive furiously, and that, to-day at least, he belonged to "those Englishmen." The towers and steeples, and the smoke of Caen soon rose into evidence; and before long, we found ourselves received with effusion by our landlord, who, at the moment, happened to be taking the air at his own hospitable and capacious doorway.

Once more we put our driver's powers to the test, and found him not wanting.

It was the next day, and a fête day. Everyone was dressed in his Sunday's best, and there was a general air of gaiety and festivity about place and people. It is astonishing how easily the French throw into themselves and their surroundings, the very air they breathe, a spirit of light-heartedness and harmless amusement. On their fête days there is a reality about their pleasures which makes itself felt with a strong assertion: it is part and parcel of their nature, an article of their religion; an hereditary gift; and it sits upon them so naturally that it exhilarates all who look on from an outer circle.

Our driver was also in his best, and pointed proudly to his little horse. "Messieurs saw how he went yesterday, and how he looks to-day," he remarked. "None the worse for his twenty miles an hour."

All quite true. The horse was fresh and in good condition; his eye was bright, and he tossed his head and shook his mane, and did his best to tell us that he was ready to do as much to-day as he had done yesterday. In point of fact he did a good deal more.

The driver mounted his box, our landlord bowed us away from the porte cochère, and we started on our long drive.

To-day we were not going to see any ruined abbeys or antiquated châteaux. Our journey would lead us chiefly to what is older than all these, yet ever new—the glorious sea.

We rattled through the streets of Caen, and caught many a glimpse of old houses up dark and narrow turnings. Soon we had left the town behind us, and commenced a lovely drive by the side of the water. It was one of those perfect days that come to us at rare intervals; once in two or three years, perhaps; days that we could

never forget though we lived a century after ; for they are celestial, and heaven seems very close to us. But we pay dearly for them, for they are almost always succeeded by days that are dark, gloomy and depressing.

Such a day was this. Everyone caught the infection, and life seemed a very bright and glorious thing. As we sped along the banks of the river Orne, the landscape formed a glowing picture. The trees waved and rustled in the breeze and threw their reflection upon the surface of the water, which equally reflected the far-off blue of the sky. We passed through villages, and found one or two interesting old Norman churches on our way. In one, old and primitive, where the pillars and arches were pure Norman, a small congregation of children was in charge of nuns, who looked very picturesque in their dress and bent over their chairs in what H. C. called the grace of perfect posture. The sun glinted through trellised windows, and fell upon the pavement and across the pillars in chequered lights. The altar was illuminated by a few candles, and a priest was going through the service with the help of two or three small acolytes. As we looked, they suddenly struck up a hymn to the air of "See the Conquering Hero Comes!" How this had travelled so far from England was a mystery ; and whether they supposed it to be something out of an oratorio we did not know. When all was over, the children filed out, the nuns followed, and they flitted down a small street into obscurity. We saw them no more.

We went our way, and reached the small artificial port of Ouisterham, at the mouth of the Orne. Up here come all vessels proceeding to Caen ; and steamers from Havre and other places ply to and fro. It was a very lovely picture and came upon us with a surprise. The locks were well constructed, and beyond them two short piers stretched out to the sea. The land circled round in a bay, the farthest visible point leading to Havre. The shore was low and flat, with stretches of white glistening sand bordered by green banks, that gave it all a clean and bright appearance. Behind rose the tower of the village church, built in the Romanesque style. Scarcely anyone was visible. There was an air of singular calmness and repose about the place, and we both longed to come and pass days here, and revel in the seclusion, the lovely and primitive harbour, and the glorious sea, which broke upon the shore with gentle murmur.

A fishing smack lying high and dry upon the sand, a few men repairing her ; a couple of fishwomen looking on in picturesque attire—these formed the only animated group in the landscape. With this exception, the place seemed deserted : we had the piers to ourselves ; far down the beach, as far as the eye could reach, there was no sign of life or human habitation. I don't know whether it was the rare and exceptional day, or whether there was some singular charm in the place itself, but few spots have impressed us more than

this little harbour on the sea-coast ; this mouth of the Orne, which leads up to the port of Caen. The sea itself was in its calmest, sleepest, loveliest mood ; the sun flashed and gleamed upon it in countless jewels ; the deep blue changed to the most transparent aqua-marine as it broke over the white sands, and ebbcd and flowed with the most musical of sounds. It was indeed music to listen to it : the music, not of the spheres, but of the elements.

A small boat made for the harbour, two fishermen presently



CASTLE DRAWBRIDGE.

landed, and one offered us the contents of his basket, whilst the other shouldered his huge nets and ran off like a lamplighter. Of course we could only decline the "caller herrin," or whatever they might be, and tell him that we were birds of passage, not birds of prey. It was all one. He went off in that happy and contented mood which is essentially the heritage of the French poor. If we did not buy, another would. They have a strong if superstitious faith, these fishermen ; they live from hand to mouth, and trust for their daily bread ; are provident ; and so there is always the handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse.

We lingered so long that our little horse waxed impatient ; but it was difficult to leave this earthly paradise. The way along the coast would have been monotonous but for the all-sufficient and magnificent sea. Presently, however, we came to a succession of small and curious watering-places. The houses are fantastically built, often within a few feet of the water, and people undress in them and gracefully trip down for their bathe. When they have had enough of paddling and floating, dancing quadrilles, and generally disporting themselves, in the light and airy fashion of the French, they trip back again—not quite so gracefully.

We passed quickly through these settlements, and made our last halt at Luc-sur-Mer, a small but frequented watering-place ; and, we thought, without exception the ugliest and dreariest ever seen. As it was a religious fête day no one was bathing ; but everyone was abroad in his best, and the place looked almost animated. The sands were wide, fine and firm, and very flat. A boat was lying upon them, high and dry, and near it were two carts piled with seaweed, ready to be taken away on the morrow. They formed a wonderful picture outlined by the sun, which was beginning to decline and cast long shadows. On the terrace above the shore booths were erected, but no one seemed buying or selling. As for ourselves, we were the observed of all observers, and evidently excited wonder, though we could not tell how far it was mixed with admiration.

Our driver had put up at an old-fashioned-looking inn, declaring that his horse must have an hour's refreshment. We gave him good measure, and at the end of an hour and a half "went for him." He was nowhere to be found. The victoria was reposing in the yard, the horse refreshing in the stables ; but the driver had disappeared. Great bells were rung, with noise enough to wake the Seven Sleepers, and ostlers were sent flying in all directions. At length he appeared, looking very conscious. We asked no questions ; discretion is the better part of valour, we lately observed ; and before long we were dashing through the streets of Luc in a manner that brought people rushing pale-faced to their doors, and no doubt sent many an evil prophecy after us. But they reckoned without their host : we did not, and no harm came to us.

On our way back we passed through Douvres, a quaint village, with small substantial houses, much decorated with flowers ; and people who lounged about, and men who made rude remarks—a rare experience this. We halted at the church of La Délivrande, a small Norman building, where the Norman fishermen have prayed for success and safety for eight hundred years ; invoking the patronage of their saints and burning propitiatory candles. It is decorated with an image of the Virgin, dug up in the days of Henry I., by, says the legend, the agency of a lamb, who scratched up the earth over it until it was discovered. The image is said to perform miracles, and has at all times been the object of extensive pilgrimages.

There is a convent close by, where, during the bathing season, ladies may go and board. But the nuns are not given to levity and the frivolous pleasures of the world, and it can scarcely be an abode of gaiety and animation.

The shadows of night were falling as we once more caught sight of the towers and steeples of Caen. They had quite fallen before we reached the old town, which was then only to be distinguished by its lights, and a clashing of bells that rang out upon the night air as we entered within its boundaries.

It was a welcome sound. We had been out the whole day, and were quite ready to grace the festive board of the Hôtel Royale. As for our little horse, it is no exaggeration to say that he seemed disposed to go over the ground a second time. His powers were inexhaustible: ours were not, and we were glad to disappear within the warmth and light of the inn.

Table d'hôte had long begun; the noisier group at the farther end had become very convivial, and our artist was looking very resigned; but our places had been reserved, and the waiter wished us *Bon appétit* as he brought in the *potage*, and hoped we had had a pleasant day. Our head waiter was missing, and we were told that he had gone up to Paris for the day by an excursion train, to see the Exhibition and the Eiffel Tower. The next morning he reappeared, pale and sleepy. The wonders of the Eiffel Tower had been too much for him. He had ascended as far as the first stage, his head had failed him, and he had very promptly to come down to earth. As for the Exhibition, it was all a jumble and a whirl; he did not think his brain would ever get right again.

We went out after dinner, that night of a memorable day, and watched the stars flashing in the silent heavens, and listened to the ringing of the curfew, and wandered in dreams to the far-off times when the curfew was first rung, and people rose with the lark and went to bed with the sun.

We went down the quiet street containing Charlotte Corday's house, and almost fancied we saw the ghost of a little deformed woman turn silently from the doorway, and begin her pilgrimage to the great capital. We saw the small determined hand strike home the dagger, the life-blood flow and turn the water to crimson, and the tyrant feel his last moments at hand—with what terrible emotions? We saw the unfortunate Charlotte Corday mount the scaffold in expiation of her heroic deed, a true martyr to her righteous cause; we saw the inhuman executioner dastardly strike the head as it rolled into the sawdust; saw the blush which is said to have risen to the cheek in reproof of the deed, and which all Paris believed in at the time: and under the influence of these ghostly visions, before us also, as in a panorama, passed all the horrors of that bygone revolution in grim and ghastly array.

Shuffling down another quiet street, we saw the figure of Beau

Brummell, who passed the later years of his life in Caen, a mere wreck of his former self, yet doing his best to keep up his bygone reputation by an occasional display of frills, laces and gold-headed canes. But the eye had lost its sparkle, the mind was weakening, and before long we see him conveyed to the *Hospice du Bon Secours*, set apart for the insane, where he ends his days.

Insensibly we presently found ourselves in front of the Abbaye aux Dames—drawn to it as the magnet attracts the needle. It looked solemn and silent and beautiful, full of peace and repose, in the darkness of night. Lights gleamed from the windows of the hospital beyond; the nuns were at their works of mercy; tending the sick, alleviating pain and suffering; the great gates were closed; the avenues were deserted and gloomy; the trees were full of darkness and seemed whispering mighty secrets to each other, as they bowed before the wind. Houses were being closed, lights disappeared: it was soon a sleeping world.

We, too, sought our couches; and in dreams, one of us, at least, lived over again the events of the past day, heard the waters of the sea breaking gently upon the shore; whilst the air seemed full of rainbow hues and the melody of birds; and, still in dreams, there was a sound as of the fluttering and folding of angels' wings: ministers charged with vials, and pouring life and health upon all; a wealth of warmth and sunshine, of happiness and rapture; and above the music of birds and the fluttering of wings, a voice seemed to ring through all the glorious ether; the song was a song of Praise, and a countless multitude joined in an everlasting chorus. And the burden of the song was this:

THOU OPENEST THINE HAND, AND FILLEST ALL THINGS LIVING
WITH PLENTIOUSNESS.



THE BROTHERS.

BY E. CHILTON.

I.

THEY were brothers. You would not have guessed it, to look at them. The elder was tall and strongly built, with dark hair, bright eyes and a bronzed skin. The younger, undersized, even for his age—and his age was nine—fair and pale, with a high head and a broad forehead: “a clever-looking little chap,” people said of him. About the elder, they said what a fine young fellow!—just that and nothing more.

Already the nine-year-old boy was full of shrewd thoughts and methodical ways. His elder, twice that age, did not know what shrewdness meant. As to method—is the wind methodical? or, granted that point, can method be expected from a reed whose will is the wind’s will? But this youth was nevertheless a hero to the little one, whose courage was less precocious than his intellect; and who found his big brother a protector in many a storm.

It was a summer’s evening, and the younger boy was coming home from school. His thin cheeks had an unwonted flush; his eyes were shining. He had yesterday become the proud possessor of a gold watch: in which his “tips” for the last two years—laid up by his own forethought in the Savings Bank—had been invested. As he walked home, satchel at back, through the crowded streets, he constantly took out his watch to examine the time; keeping it on each occasion rather longer in view than was necessary, and casting a conscious glance around him in the hope that the passer-by might observe it. Suddenly, turning a corner, he ran against his foe, Big Kelly.

Big Kelly was a dunce and a tyrant, as tall and more burly than the elder brother, but still at school the terror of the lower forms. Against this old-fashioned and clever child he nourished a special grudge; which, greatly to the boy’s alarm, he lost no occasion of practically indulging.

“What’s that, you young reprobate? Been pocket-picking? Hand over, or I’ll set the police on you.”

“Don’t! Don’t! It’s my watch—my new watch! I saved up my money to buy it.”

“Don’t believe you. You’ve been and prigged it;” and the bully, who had now forcibly possessed himself of the watch, dangled it up and down by its slender guard, to the intense misery of its owner.

“Off with you! Off with you! Police! Police!” cried Big Kelly, seizing the child by the collar, and setting off to run, the watch swinging from one hand, his victim fast in the other.

By and bye, they reached the bridge. The setting sun was casting a glow upon the water. Big Kelly, pausing at the parapet to take breath, amused himself by twirling the watch rapidly round and round in the red light, its golden rim a circlet of sparkles.

Suddenly—was it by accident? Big Kelly subsequently affirmed the same—the treasure, so long hoped for, had vanished. The strong current below the arches of the bridge had pounced upon it, swept it round and round and away on with the rushing river; in another instant it had sunk, and the current whirled over its grave.

An hour later the elder brother, running upstairs three steps at a time, was struck by a little moaning cry, as of some small animal in pain. He pushed open the door through which it came, and had nearly stumbled over a sobbing heap prostrate on the floor.

"Why, Jem, my little chap! what is it? Big Kelly again? What has he done? Never mind, leave him to me."

The strong young fellow had lifted the boy into his arms. He sobbed out all his woe on that friendly breast.

One more hour had gone by. Jem was in bed; he had crept there supperless, exhausted by weeping. Rolf, the elder brother, had not yet returned from his mission of righteous retribution. The child had infinite confidence in his brother's prowess; he would be avenged; he knew Big Kelly would suffer; but the watch—that orb of delight! Was it for this that he had schemed and saved?—denied himself sweets and toys, and his brother birthday presents? How happy he had been last night at this time!—the watch had just been bought—he was holding it to his ear to hear its even tick—he was hanging it carefully upon its hook in the watch case Rolf had given to him. The first thing in the morning he had thought of it—wondered if it were a dream—and there it had been, ticking at his side!

"Jem, old fellow! Here, wake up."

The elder brother had returned. He sat down upon the bed, and laid his hand on the fair head half muffled in the counterpane.

"Jem! I've thrashed Big Kelly. You won't see him at school to-morrow; or if you do, just look at his eye. It's got raw beef on it this moment, or I'm much mistaken. Jem!"

"Yes."

"Why, what a 'yes!' It sounds all down among the dead men! Where's your ear? That's right! Now you listen!"

His face still buried, Jem obeyed, started wildly, sprang up in the bed.

"My watch! My watch! And it's dry! How did you get it? How did you get it?"

"Never mind how. I've a particular friend, a merman, down in the river. Now take care of it, and I don't think you need be afraid any more of Big Kelly. When he wants to know the time, you can show it to him."

"But it's got a different chain—a gold chain! It's a nicer watch than the other. You've bought it me—Rolf, you've bought it me!" He rapturously hugged his benefactor.

"But how did you manage?" he asked, a moment afterwards, with one of his shrewd glances. "You never save up your money, I know. And I thought you hadn't got any!"

"How did I manage it? Never mind! That's my affair! Now here are your clothes, old chap. Get up again, and come to your supper."

It was not until the following evening that the younger brother missed Morcar: Morcar, Rolf's dog, a grey staghound, faithful and beloved. A friend had long coveted him—and lately, being about to leave the city, had offered a high price for him to his master. But Rolf, though he wanted money—he was always in want of money—would not listen. Sell Morcar, the apple of his eye! he said.

"Rolf! It's not true?" cried Jem, running in from school.

"What's not true?" asked the elder brother.

"A fellow told me you'd sold Morcar to Brown."

"So I have. He'll be happier in the country. Don't remind me it, old boy."

How hoarsely these last words were uttered! And why did Rolf stride so quickly out of the room?

For a long time it seemed strangely unnatural to meet Rolf out of doors without Morcar—or to find him sitting in the house, and no Morcar, nose on paws, beside his chair.

But Jem was only nine years old, and did not realise at first that Morcar's departure and the arrival of his second watch had been coincident events.

II.

THE tyranny of Big Kelly proved, after all, a fortunate circumstance for the younger brother. There was a bigger Kelly, who presently heard of the outrage committed by his son; who was very angry, with the kind of anger to be expected from Kelly's father—and who determined to make amends to little Jem. He was rich, and wished at first to present the boy with another watch set in diamonds; but finding that the elder brother had supplied the loss—"lucky young dog," said Bigger Kelly, "to have an elder brother who could afford it!"—he soothed himself by making much of the child.

A marvellously sharp child! in this way just what he had desired—ineffectually—his own son to be. The bigger Kelly, more and more, as years went on, admired his acuteness—even his tendency, never too obtrusive, to do the best possible for No. 1. In process of time he offered the boy a seat in his counting-house; for this bigger Kelly had made his large fortune in merchandise. Jem would make a fortune too, he prophesied; a helping hand from himself should not be wanting. Yes, it was a good stroke of fortune for Jem

when that twirling circlet flew into the river ! And meanwhile the better watch, the price of Morcar, ticked always steadily in his pocket ; and promised, as guaranteed, to last a lifetime.

The early home of the brothers was broken up. The elder had long gone forth into the world. The younger remained under the wing of the bigger Kelly. He was soon a nice-looking young man, his hair still fair and shining, his grey eyes keener than before, his expression still shrewd—but not unpleasantly so. He looked clever—and a gentleman : at five-and-twenty he had won the heart of Big Kelly's youngest sister, a sweet little "rosebud of a girl," her father's pride and darling. The bigger Kelly could deny her nothing, and he did not wonder at her fancy for talented young Jem. It showed her sense, he thought ; for Jem was pushing on. His faculty for saving had not diminished itself ; he had saved a good deal, and what he saved he could always, in some miraculous way, double and treble by his skill in the money market. His speculations were invariably lucky ; the bigger Kelly would recount them, and chuckle over them, among his own contemporaries. The Rosebud had a nice little fortune of her own ; but her father knew that it could not be placed in safer hands than Jem's. They were married and happily settled in a pretty house—not too large ; and the ménage not extravagant to start with—not far from the town ; and Jem went on diligently in his business, and prospered, growing richer every day.

Riches, even more than elsewhere, reigned paramount in that great city. Especially in the clique of the bigger Kelly, and soon of Jem, a man's banking account was the measure of his estimation. By degrees Jem became a little ashamed to mention his elder brother. For while the younger had grown richer, the elder had grown poorer. The parable of the Prodigal Son was in their cases reversed. Jem, the younger, had stayed and prospered in his native town ; and Rolf had gone away to a distant county, and there had wasted his substance—not in riotous, but in careless living.

It was said, a page or two back, that Rolf was always in want of money. He always had been so ; he was so still. Somehow money melted in his pockets. Friends were in need : Rolf's scanty purse was at their disposal ; friends had turned up unexpectedly : Rolf must feast them ; some gaiety, tempting but expensive, offered itself : Rolf and his belongings must share in it. His belongings, for Rolf, too, was married ; he had been married a long while before Jem : and he had an only son, a beautiful and clever boy, who often reminded him—although Jem was never beautiful—of his younger brother.

His wife was beautiful, too—Rolf was ever an admirer of beauty. And she had been a petted child, cherished and idolised even more than the girl chosen by Jem, and in a household far more refined. She had grown up sheltered from every blast ; then suddenly, her parents had died of some infectious illness—and she was left alone in this

hard world, and poor. What could Rolf—who already loved her passionately—do, but marry her forthwith? To the winds went prudence; they were soon happily settled—comforts, within their means and without their means, lavished about them, and Rolf his wife's slave and devotee.

She had no notion of the value of money; she had never learned it in her first luxurious home. She was very delicate, also; and Rolf could not bear that the wind should blow upon her. For himself, he was always hoping that better days would come. He worked as diligently as he knew how in his profession; was always kind, always generous, always impulsive, always imprudent and careless. After a while they had to move into poorer quarters—then into poorer still.

"I wonder," the elder brother thought sometimes, "if I could get help of any kind from Jem?"

He wrote to Jem once—feeling his way, for he was very proud—giving some hint of his affairs to that intent. But the younger brother's answer had a sharp tone in it—a tone of severity.

"I can't ask him for anything whatever," thought Rolf, as he read it; "after all, poor fellow, he has his way to work up—and he is nine years younger than I. It is I who should be helping him—foolish spendthrift that I am!"

For there had long been some three hundred miles between them, and the elder brother had no one to tell him of the extent of Jem's prosperity: which, indeed, Jem played his cards too well to reveal as yet fully to the world.

III.

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, sir, on business."

It was late at night. The younger brother, who had been married a year, was sitting alone, absorbed in papers, in his study. His wife had gone to a ball at the bigger Kelly's, whither Jem intended eventually to follow.

He rose as a tall figure, his hat drawn low on his brows, his face half muffled in a comforter, his coat collar high, was ushered into the room.

The servant closed the door, and departed. The visitor turned, carefully examining the handle. "Is it fast?" he said.

Then, as Jem, in astonishment, stared, he threw off his hat and wrappers, and with one hasty stride across the room, seized the younger brother's hands.

"Jem, old chap!" he said.

"Rolf!" said Jem, slowly. There was recognition in his glance—but no joy—not even pleasure. The momentary, impulsive joy in Rolf's eyes—the same kind eyes as of old—flashed back into darkness.

"What are you come about? Some trouble, I see," said Jem.

"Trouble, indeed; or should I come in this way, all this distance

after all these years? I won't keep you in suspense, Jem: I want your help. Yes, I am in awful trouble. If you will not help me, I shall be——never mind where. But you will help me. Surely you will."

"Go on," said the younger brother, coldly.

"Jem, old fellow, I knew you had to fight your way. I've never asked you for money before—but I have wanted money dreadfully. Things have been getting worse and worse with me, Jem—I've been a fool, I know—but—if you can give me a fresh start now, you shall see—you shall see."

"Well, explain yourself. I can do nothing in the dark," said Jem. "I thought it was something of the kind, from the tone of your last letter. Here, sit down," and he pushed forward an easy-chair.

"I can't sit down—I can't rest till I know. I thought—oh, I thought there could be no doubt; but now——Jem, it's worse than debt! I must make a clean breast of it—you are my only hope. I accepted a trusteeship—a friend of mine, going on a long voyage, left some money with me to invest for his children. Just after he went, I was hard driven—how hard, only God knows. My wife was ill—dying, I thought—there was a writ out against me. I couldn't tell where to turn—I borrowed that money. Jem, I only borrowed it—I have paid the interest, for the year since I had it, punctually. I meant to repay the principal as soon as I could. God knows I meant it."

"And, pray, how?"

The elder brother's eyes fell. His face was one living agony.

"How? How? I cannot tell how. But I meant it. I thought the means would come—I thought I would work harder than ever—I thought something might happen—or, if not, I might get you to lend it to me. And now—now, Jem—my friend is dead; his executors—strangers, hard men—have written to me—I have to produce the sum. If I cannot, I shall be in—in jail, before the week is out. My boy's name will be disgraced—and my wife will die. She can never live through it. Jem—my only resource—you are my only resource—my only resource."

He kept repeating these last words in a hurried murmur—walking to and fro, his hands clenched, looking, from time to time, in nervous desperation at his brother.

"What would you wish me to do?" said Jem.

"To refund the money—to lend it to me—your interest shall be sure. I will do anything—break stones on the road—to repay you."

"Breaking stones is not usually a lucrative profession," said the younger brother; "what is the sum?"

"Two thousand pounds. Jem, old fellow! have you forgotten what chums we were? Oh, help me, help me now—think of my wife—you have a wife of your own."

"My wife knows how to manage her money affairs. So long as

she lived, I should never, myself, be in the straits you speak of. The comparison will not hold. Your wife was supposed to be dying a hundred times before; why should she die now? But if she did die, you would probably, after a time, get on a great deal better. Forgive my plain speaking. I think, from the letter you wrote to me, describing her delicacy and her helplessness, that you owe much of your trouble to her."

"Say another syllable and I knock you down," returned Rolf.

Jem compressed his lips and was silent.

"Demon in my brother's form, will you lend me the money? I ask it once more, because I am forced to ask. If I cannot repay it, my son shall, when he is old enough. Will you lend it to save me from jail?—to save your own name, the same as mine?"

"I will not," said Jem, whom his brother's manner had now still further hardened: "I will not be an accomplice in crime. As you have sown, you must reap. Nor the name—I shall get over that: everyone who knows the facts will sympathize with me. I cannot afford to lose two thousand pounds."

For one moment Rolf stood still, with intense difficulty restraining himself. Then, mechanically, he resumed his hat and wraps. When Jem again looked round from his high-backed chair, his elder brother was gone.

IV.

"Is there nothing, positively nothing, to be done?" said the younger brother.

Five-and-twenty years had rolled away since that nocturnal visit; five-and-twenty years since the deplorable events which had speedily followed it, and in which everyone—everyone in his own circle—had, as he had prophesied, pitied him for his unfortunate connection with that fraudulent trustee whose improvidence had ended in ruin. Five-and-twenty years! and the once fair head of the little schoolboy was grey; but it was the same face, only harder and older; and the same keen eyes were fixed, with an expression now of careworn anxiety, upon the doctor.

"I will give ten thousand pounds to any man who can save her," he said, as the doctor, grave and meditative, stood silent.

"There is one man who might do it. Mind! I only say *might*. One man only in all Europe," said the doctor.

"And who is he? I will send for him this moment," said the younger brother, his hand upon the bell.

"Dr. Falkland, I mean. You know his name, of course. Yes, if we telegraph at once, it is just possible."

A telegraph form lay near; it was quickly filled in, the younger brother writing at railway speed:

"*Ten thousand pounds if you can save my child. Pray come quickly.*"

The telegram despatched, the doctor returned to the sick-room. The younger brother, too anxious to follow him, walked restlessly up and down. Presently the doctor was recalled in hot haste to the study. The younger brother stood white as death, a yellow paper in his hand.

"Doctor, he will not come."

"Will not come!" exclaimed the doctor. He snatched the telegram, and read:

"You must excuse me. I cannot come to you."

"It is that he will not," repeated the younger brother. "'To me,' he says—he 'cannot come to me.' What have I done to offend him?"

"Nonsense," said the doctor, abruptly. "Give me another form."

He sat down himself, and wrote in his own name:

"Pray come at once. A matter of life and death. She is his only daughter."

"There, I think you may rely upon him now," he said, as the messenger was despatched once more. "But it is strange. I cannot understand it."

He looked at the paper musingly.

"He is a rich man, this Falkland. He married an heiress—one of his patients—a millionaire's daughter. He is quite independent of his practice. Perhaps your message sounded too much like a bribe."

"I'll apologise when I see him," said the younger brother. But if he could have smiled when his only girl, his idol, lay at the point of death upstairs, he would have smiled at the notion of any man—millionaire or not—thinking lightly of ten thousand pounds.

Still, as the long hours rolled on, he paced up and down, up and down, his study floor. It was not the study in which his brother had visited him. That house of his early marriage days had long been discarded. This was a splendid room, richly furnished; there was nothing to recall that unpleasant interview; nothing except—he thought once, as he felt how terrible anxiety was, of his elder brother's anxiety that night. Yes, that must have been hard to bear, too! However disgraceful its causes, hard, no doubt.

He almost wished—but he must not think of that. It would unnerve him still more than he was unnerved already. By long custom he had acquired the art of banishing from his mind every circumstance of that painful night.

Now and then, as he waited, he visited his daughter's room. At the door, each time, he paused and listened, afraid to enter. What might he hear? What might he see? But each time she lay as before; prostrate, half-conscious, her fair young features of a strange, unearthly hue, her sweet lips colourless, half parted, her eyes half closed. Oh, how like death she looked! And yet she must not

die—she should not. He could not lose her—the one thing in this world which he loved more dearly than his money.

Her mother, his wife, sat beside the bed; his sons, fine young men, were also watching. He cared for them all; but not for all together as for this one—this girl, longed for through daughterless years, granted at last—and now—dying!

But no—no—she should not die. Ten thousand pounds! Let Dr. Falkland feign as he might. He would undoubtedly for ten thousand pounds do his best.

Day was breaking when the carriage rolled quickly to the door. The younger brother went out into the hall. He would have asked, "Is the doctor come?" but his lips clave together. He could only gaze in an agony of suspense, as the door was thrown open. Yes; he was come. The one man in Europe who could save her!

He was a fine-looking man, tall and dark. His eyes—why did their glance send a strange pang through the younger brother's heart? He still stood speechless. Dr. Falkland bowed politely, but with marked coldness.

"Thank God—thank God, you are come!" broke involuntarily from the father at last. "You will save her?"

"I will try to save her," said the physician, averting his eyes.

Then, as if putting a strong force upon himself, he looked full at the younger brother, and added:

"I will save her—if it be possible to man."

With these words he went upstairs, the family doctor anxiously escorting him.

The younger brother withdrew again to his study; his hard face sank upon his folded arms on the table, and he wept. When had he wept before? Oh, how long ago! Strange memories came back with those tears.

V.

"SHE will do now," said the family doctor: "you may rest from your anxiety. Dr. Falkland is quite satisfied about her. She will get well."

It was two days later. All this time the famed physician had been assiduous in his cares. By his skill, under God, he had brought back the colour to those ashen cheeks; the eyes had life in them again; the lips were faintly smiling.

"Yes, she will get well; I have left ample directions. Mr. Gregory is fully competent to take charge of the case, and to bring it safely through."

Dr. Falkland was drawing on his gloves as he spoke. His manner—which, with the patient, had been kindness itself: attentive, unselfish, courteous kindness—was now, as at first, strangely cold.

"I know not how to thank you," said the younger brother. "She is my dearest possession. I could not have lived without her. But here—pray accept——"

He held out, with some timidity—the doctor's manner compelled that—the cheque for ten thousand pounds.

"On no account," said Dr. Falkland, waving it back. "I have simply done my duty. I can on no account take any fee from you."

"But, Dr. Falkland, I cannot—I cannot think of such a thing. No fee! It is unexampled! And two days; this distance from London. I cannot think of it. Pray, from consideration for my feelings, accept this cheque."

"There was a time," said Dr. Falkland, immovable, "when a cheque for one-fifth of that amount would have saved a life—two lives. But that is past."

One-fifth! Two thousand pounds! Ah, the younger brother recollected. Like a flood those painful memories rushed over him. But how could Dr. Falkland know?

"Is there no way, none at all," he stammered, "in which I can repay you?"

"Yes, there is one; one way only. When you remember that I have, under God, saved your daughter, remember, also, that you might have saved my mother. As to my father—but enough—remember just that. That you might have saved my mother. This is all I ask. Good evening."

"One moment," cried the younger brother, as those dark eyes flashed full upon him; "your name is Falkland. Who are you?"

"My name was changed by the conditions of a property when I married. I am your nephew—the son of your elder brother—whom you might have rescued from dishonour worse than death—and would not. His imprisonment killed my mother. When he came out again, he found only her grave. That is all I ask. *Remember.*"

And he was gone.

VI.

LATE on a summer's evening, a thin, grey man was knocking at the door of Dr. Falkland's London house. As he waited, the sunset glow was shining upon the creepered balconies, the flowered window-ledge on the opposite side of the square. Somehow, the red light recalled to him another evening—how many years ago? A gold circlet, twirling and sparkling over the rushing waters, a little boy's heart thumping in suppressed anguish—then kind, brotherly arms—a sudden joy—an unexpected gift!

In his attitude, his whole expression, deep humiliation was evident. He had begun, during the last few weeks, to stoop a little; his head was bowed; the shrewdness of his eyes had given place to another look, half anxious, half imploring.

The door was opened by a stately butler. Yes, Dr. Falkland was at home. Would he walk in? What name?

His voice quavered a little as he replied that he would give no name, if the doctor —

He was interrupted. The physician himself, crossing the hall, saw him and came forward.

"May I speak to you alone?" asked the visitor. "I came to London on purpose."

Dr. Falkland bowed. In another moment they stood alone in the consulting room.

"I have come," said the younger brother, "to humble myself; to beseech you to forgive me. My child is well; but I cannot rest—I have no rest, either night or day."

"I can well believe it," said the young physician gravely; "but if forgiveness of mine can help you, I forgive you freely."

"But your father—he—Rolf; may I see your father?"

Then, once again, the grey man bowed his head and wept.

"You know that he is here—in this house?"

"I did not know—I guessed it. He remembers all, of course, as clearly as yesterday. Will he see me?"

"You are not aware of his state?"

The younger brother looked up in vague alarm.

"The seeds of brain disease were sown in the course of his long troubles. For many years he has been as a little child. Quite happy, full of love and gentleness; but his intellect gone. And now—he has long been failing—I am glad you are come. You are only just in time."

"Let me see him—let me see him at once," said the younger brother. The physician in silence led the way up a great flight of stairs. A large window on a lobby, opening westward, gave a glimpse, far off, of the river. Once more the red glow recalled that river of yore.

They reached a pleasant room, still westward. Still the red beams streamed in. Here, it seemed, was gathered every comfort, even every luxury, that one sick-room could contain. A fair young matron rose from a low chair beside a bed.

"My wife," said Dr. Falkland.

The younger brother bowed mechanically. His eyes had roamed beyond her, to the bed beside which she had been sitting, and which was strewn with toys and childish pictures. For there, in that bed, one toy in his feeble hand, his smiling glance absorbed in another at a little distance, lay, propped up with pillows, an old man.

An old man, and yet—— There were the same dark eyes, still kind, though somewhat vacant, as they rested upon the toy. There was the dark head—scarcely yet so grey as his own—which had so often been bowed to hear his childish tales of joy or sorrow. And he was not really old—he ought not to be old; not in years. But old!—he was very young! he was, as Dr. Falkland had said, a little child.

"Rolf!" he cried gleefully, "Rolf! Just look at that horse! These toys are really wonderful! I should not be surprised, now, if he jumped off the bed, and cantered round the room."

He looked up, laughing at his own fancy ; and his eyes met the younger brother's.

"How do you do?" he said kindly, holding out his left hand, his right being engaged with the toy ; "I am very glad to see you."

"Father!" said Dr. Falkland, coming gently to the bedside, "do you know who this gentleman is? Do you remember—your younger brother?"

For a moment the old man looked puzzled : then gazed upon the visitor, and was silent. The younger brother could no longer restrain himself. He sank on his knees beside the bed.

"Rolf," he cried, "Rolf"—and he pressed the feeble hand between his own—"Oh, Rolf, my brother! say that you know me! Let me hear you say just once, 'I forgive you, Jem.'"

At that once familiar name a gleam of intelligence revived in the old man's face. He looked searchingly into the grey eyes, once so keen, which, with beseeching penitence, met his own.

"Why, Jem, my little chap!" he said slowly—"Jem, old fellow!" And he laid his hand, as of old, upon the grey head, once so fair.

"Jem, my little chap, what is it?" he said once more. "Big Kelly again? Never mind! You shall have another watch. I've no money—but I can sell Morcar. Come and tell me all about it, my little lad."

Then, with a mighty effort, he turned himself in the bed, clasped both his arms around the younger brother's neck ; and all was silence.

When they unwound his arms, and raised his face, there was a smile upon it like the smile of a satisfied child. And like a child he lay sleeping—his last sleep.



DARBY AND JOAN.

We two sit silent, our fire beside,
It's just a year since I was your bride,
We look at each other, but neither is seen,
Because of the ghosts that rise between.

What a cloudy crowd of them ! ghost on ghost,
Of all you have lived for, and all you have lost ;
They blind you, and so you will never see
How well you might leave them and come to me !

I know you could do what I cannot do ;
I cannot brave them and go to you ;
Yet they are but shadows—what frightens me
Is another ghost which you cannot see.

A PAGE OF THE PAST.

A GREAT, grim hotel, rendered even grimmer and more ghostly by the gleam of the gas-lamps in the street, and the snow which was rapidly falling. Not a ray from one of the long row of high, narrow windows ; not a beam from beneath the closed wings of the enormous porte cochère. You would have said the place was utterly deserted and given over to the rampaging of rats and the spinning of spiders. Yet, precisely as the clock of the neighbouring church struck nine, a cab drove up the dreary street and halted before the building in question. Not a cab in the English sense of the word, but a fabric made up of shrivelled leather and shrunken wood, and drawn by a horse to which perhaps neither of these adjectives would have been inapplicable. The driver had all the rotundity to himself, in his oilskin hat and glistening macintosh. He rolled his gentle person down from the box, gave a loud rap with the enormous dolphin-head knocker, and then opened the door of the vehicle.

A minute passed. The rattle of a chain was heard within, and the next moment the one leaf of the heavy porte-cochère swung slowly back, exposing to view an old white-headed serving man in dark clothes, one hand upon the immense lock, the other raising on high a flaring candle in a huge silver candlestick.

Then, and only then, the occupant of the cab came forth ; slowly, carefully, with a very visible hobble in his gait, and entered into the gloom of the enormous vestibule. He was enveloped in a long sort of military cloak, and the lurid rays of the flaring candle falling upon him as he passed, showed the features to be those of a man of perhaps sixty.

The cab had driven off, the heavy door had been closed with a clang that echoed throughout the building, and the visitor, following the servant—candlestick ever on high—proceeded to mount the broad steps of the wide uncarpeted marble staircase. On entering the enormous ante-chamber, from whose dark walls the full-length portraits seemed to gaze frowningly down, Germain set his light down upon the long centre table, and silently divested the visitor of his cloak. Then, crossing to one of the opposite doors, to the left of the huge carved fireplace, drew back the dark red portière.

The old gentleman passed through into the saloon beyond. It was dreary in the extreme, as were the other two which he had to traverse before reaching the mistress of the house. Heavy sofas and immovable chairs were set formally round the walls ; heavy silk curtains and antique cabinets, tarnished mirrors and gilding, fretted ceilings, with faded gods and goddesses frowning or simpering down from their

cloudy panels. The whole glinting faintly and fitfully through the pervading gloom as the faithful Germain passed on, following in the track of the visitor, with his candle on high and his carpet shoes softly thudding over the carefully-waxed floors.

In the third saloon, which was much smaller than its two giant companions, things wore a less cheerless appearance. Two of the clusters of wax-lights on the high mantelpiece were burning, and shed a soft radiance around, falling full and clearly upon the large oval portrait immediately above. A lovely portrait too. A young girl in rose-coloured satin and lace, with a profusion of gold-tinted hair, dark, laughter-loving eyes, a slightly retroussé nose, and a complexion like the heart of a sea-shell. Head-dress and robe told of at least half a century back.

The visitor glanced up at the portrait as he passed, gave a stifled sigh, and then, with hurried step, limped after the faithful Germain. The latter noiselessly opened the wide white-and-gold door, and, in a low, subdued tone, announced : " M. le Marquis de Pommarais."

Striving hard to conceal his hobble, the old gentleman entered the apartment beyond.

A room lovely even in its evident decay. Not large, octagon-shaped, a ceiling heavy with gilding and stucco, and out of whose panels cupids smiled down while scattering handfuls of roses—walls hung with pale pink velvet—low couches and easy-chairs to match, a small cabinet or two in ebony and ivory—the whole softly lighted by half-a-dozen tapers in the small rock-crystal chandelier. The air heavy with the scent of flowers—chiefly roses—scattered about, and tepid with the pleasant warmth of the cheerful fire that glowed redly upon the hearth. Curtains carefully drawn over closed padded shutters, so as to keep out all noise from without. Two low and deep armchairs drawn up before the fireplace ; one of which was occupied by a little old lady in dove-coloured satin, with a knot of dark geranium-coloured ribbon upon her breast and a veil of black lace somewhat coquettishly arranged upon the snowy white hair.

" Good evening, Duchess," said the gentleman, bending over, and gallantly kissing the hand extended towards him.

" Good evening, Marquis."

And then the latter took the seat prepared for him, and stretched out his chilled feet towards the welcome warmth of the old-fashioned wood fire.

For the last thirty years this had, almost without interruption, been his constant evening visit. Had he not put in his usual nine o'clock appearance, the Duchess of Altamonte would have at once begun to foresee an apoplectic fit, or perhaps even the end of the world itself.

" Terrible weather, Duchess."

" So Germain tells me. Ah me ! for the days in which snow and rain were as unfelt as the sunshine and flowers."

The Marquis nodded assent as he looked over towards his companion.

She was a very lovely old woman—as beautiful in her old age as she had been at sweet sixteen, when, a young bride, she had sat for the oval portrait in the next room.

True, her hair was white as the driven snow now, and the features were sharper; but the sea-shell complexion was still there; while the dark eyes gleamed pleasantly forth as mischievously as ever, and the teeth, as shown between the finely-cut lips, were—well, I'm not *quite* sure about the teeth, they were too charmingly white and even to be altogether strangers to the great American dentist—so I will say no more about them, save that they helped to make up a picture as pretty as you might well wish to look upon.

Her hands were the very perfection of an old woman's hands—purely white, though shrivelled, and with the blue veins showing softly clear beneath the delicate skin. Slim, taper fingers, laden with glittering rings. One hand held a large ivory fan, the other lay carelessly upon her lap.

"Ah me! indeed," echoed the Marquis. "Though, for that matter, all the world seems going wrong."

"You are right there, indeed. For even in my retirement it makes itself felt. Why, only to-day, Madame Marengo, the banker's wife, had the impertinence to send up her card."

"And you?"

"Told Germain to burn it, of course."

"Things are coming to a pretty pass, indeed."

"No more distinction of class—anywhere—all mixed up, like the seasons. Who ever heard of snow before All Saints in *our* young days?"

"No, indeed. Winter was winter then, and summer, summer."

"But it's greatly our own fault, do you know, Marquis; not about the seasons, but about the classes—we have not kept our places. On the contrary, we have kept on yielding step after step, and backing before the flood."

"Can you then wonder, Duchess, if all these rich upstarts take advantage and press on?"

"Especially with royalty giving them the occasion as it now ever does. Who ever heard of Madame Bianco or Monsieur Bruno being received at court till nowadays? Ah, I'm very glad I retired in time."

She brushed off some imaginary fluff from her dress with her fan, as if it had been the Biancos and Brunos in question.

"Ah, yes, it was very different when I was in office."

"Yes, I should think it was! Life was worth living then."

"What a difference now!"

As he said this the memory of those other palmy days started up before him. The great saloons he had just passed through in silence

and shivering, radiant with all that was genial and bright—the music and the voices, the glitter and the whispers, the smile of the lovely young hostess. Here he looked up. The old lady opposite was smiling at him—the spirit of the smile of days gone by yet lingered in that which now met him. Matter had changed for the worse, it is true, but the immaterial was ever the same. He read her thoughts, and replied to them with a smile of his own.

“Ah, Duchess, do you remember that evening after the ball when I ——”

“Hid yourself behind a curtain till all the rest were gone, and then came out, like harlequin after the play is over, to have a peep at the deserted scene.”

“And you ——”

“Showed you the door, if I remember rightly.”

“And I returned by the window, if I don’t forget.”

“Ah, Marquis, you were always a regular dare-devil!”

The old lady tapped his arm with her fan. He smiled and drew himself somewhat up in his deep arm-chair.

“And then you had not the gout, you know,” she added, mischievously.

The Marquis did not smile this time. He gave a heavy sigh and a slight shrug of his shrunken shoulders.

“Nor I my rheumatism. Just see if that window behind me is properly closed. I sometimes think that even Germain is going the way of all the rest of them, and thinking of nothing but himself. I’m sure I feel a draught upon my shoulders.”

The old gentleman hastened to obey. The draught existed but in the imagination of the old lady; as, truth to say, did numberless other things of somewhat less insignificance.

“We are both horribly dull to-night, Marquis; suppose you tell me a story to pass the time till Germain brings in the tea. It’s quite early yet.”

The clock upon the mantelpiece chimed out ten as if in response.

“A story? Well, yes, though I do not exactly know ——”

“Oh, hunt up something in that wicked old head of yours; something true, you know, with just a spice of scandal to flavour it—you know exactly what I mean.”

The old gentleman passed his delicate hand across his brow, and would probably have gone on to caress his hair, had he not been afraid of deranging the Paris-made toupet with which the summit of his cranium was garnished. After a moment’s silence on his part, and expectation on hers, he said:

“Did I ever tell you the history of her Majesty’s—her late Majesty, of course—sapphire brooch?”

“No, never. That will do famously. You can begin in orthodox nursery style—‘Once upon a time there lived a king.’”

She stopped and sighed, for the thought obtruded itself that neither

the Marquis nor herself were very distant from that second childhood that so pitilessly awaits those who are forced to linger somewhat too long in this go-ahead world of ours.

"I scarcely wonder at your never hearing of it, for it was hushed up as well as might be, and you were in St. Petersburg when it happened."

"Ah, dear St. Petersburg!" murmured the old lady, letting her fan slide from her grasp, and clasping her two hands upon her lap. "I shall always look back to those days as golden ones."

Whether the late Duke's (he was ambassador there) having caught bronchitis in the said city, that finally carried him off, had anything to influence those "golden" days, the old Marquis was too prudent and polite to inquire. He simply cleared his ancient throat and started:

"I was one evening waiting for his Majesty in the yellow saloon—you remember the yellow saloon, Duchess?"

"Yes, I should think I do! No fair woman could ever fail remembering and hating it after she had once set her foot in it. Please go on."

"For I was to accompany his Majesty to one of his shooting boxes for a day's hunting, and we were to return in time for the opera next night. Madame X. was to sing in the Huguenots, and the whole Court and town were in a state of excitement and expectation."

"Of course they were, as was quite natural—and his Majesty in particular, if certain tales are to be credited—for X. was an artiste among a thousand and a beauty among a million."

"Quite wrong for once, Duchess—there was never anything but a platonic affection——"

"Now, Marquis, Marquis, don't talk nonsense—you know better than that. The idea of a platonic affection between a handsome woman—an artiste into the bargain—and a crowned head! Preposterous! As well say that tow and tinder won't blaze up on coming together! But just go on."

The gentleman shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"At last his Majesty came in, and we were just going to leave, when he exclaimed in a vexed tone: 'I had quite forgotten to-day is the 25th—Fifine's birthday, and I promised her a doll.' Then, after biting the tip of his glove, as was his wont when perplexed, he added: 'Just wait here a minute; I'll go and see what's to be done.'

"So I waited—and in less than five minutes he came back smiling, and with a long parcel in his hand. 'Fifine shall have her doll all in time—I've purloined one of Princess A.'s for the moment. Tell Mademoiselle La Roche to have it replaced.' Fifine, you know, was Madame X.'s little girl, and Mademoiselle La Roche was governess to his own little daughter. So we got into the carriage and drove off, stopping on the way at Madame X.'s lodgings and

handing over the doll to her maid, who had come down to the carriage.

"We got back the next evening just in time to dress for the theatre. But, on entering the palace, we were met by a piece of news that, for the moment, put everything else out of our heads."

"Ah! now we are coming to it," put in the Duchess.

"Well, not quite so fast as you think, perhaps."

"Go on, then. What was the news?"

"Nothing less than a robbery in the palace."

"Princess A.'s doll perhaps?" laughed the old lady.

"Something rather more serious. A splendid sapphire brooch had disappeared from the Queen's toilet-table and was nowhere to be found or accounted for. The brooch was priceless and matchless. Her Majesty was dreadfully angry, for the jewel was a favourite one and ——"

"I can quite feel for her. Sapphires are such lovely stones!"

"Of course the thing had been kept as quiet as possible, awaiting the King's return—and then ——"

"Ah, we all know what a palace secret is! Something that everyone within the walls knows and is dying to speak of—only doesn't dare. Well?"

"The King was quite as much puzzled as the rest. No one had been in her Majesty's apartments except the lady in waiting, the young Princesses and their governess, and the usual attendants. They of course were above all suspicion. Nor could anyone gain access to the dressing-room, unless by passing through the private drawing-rooms on the one side, and the children's playroom and bed-chambers on the other. And yet someone must have taken the jewel—for gone it was."

"What a pity there were no clairvoyants in those days," said the Duchess. "It might have made the fortune of one of them, at least."

"But there were not, you see. They are a later invention."

"Yes, like imitation bric-à-brac—and about as barefaced. But go on."

"So, there being no clairvoyants, the head of the police was sent for ——"

"A much wiser plan!"

"And the whole thing confided to him, with the order to set to work as quickly and silently as possible."

"And then?"

"We dressed and went to the theatre."

"Ah, the tow and tinder are drawing nigh each other."

"Well, his Majesty *was* somewhat tinderish that evening, if you like to call it so. The hunt had turned out all but a failure, and the news of the robbery completed the measure of his ill-humour. The drive to the opera house was not a pleasant one."

"I daresay not."

"And, altogether, I was anything but sorry when it came to an end. We had not been seated very long before the moment for X.'s appearance upon the stage arrived. You might have heard a mouse sigh, so silent and attentive was the whole house."

"Yes, not like nowadays, when people do nothing but chatter. Rich, vulgar women lolling in their boxes and trying to outvie each other in the number of their visits and the loudness of their tongues."

"At last she came on—advanced right under the royal box, and made her courtesy. And at the same instant her Majesty exclaimed, in a tone loud enough, I fear, to have been heard half-a-dozen boxes off: 'My sapphire brooch! She has on my brooch!'"

"That wasn't queen-like, but I can quite believe it of her late Majesty. She was terribly bourgeois at times. Pray go on."

"And there it was, sure enough—that unfortunate brooch—sparkling away as openly upon the X.'s breast as if her Majesty herself had placed it there."

"Perhaps *his* Majesty had done so."

"Fie, fie, Duchess, how prone you are to think evil!"

"My dear Marquis, as you are to speak good; I believe the amount of sincerity is about equal in both."

"How so?"

"Why, you dear, innocent man, has habit become such a second nature to you that you forget that court-bred people never say just what they think, nor think just what they say? Now, pray finish shrugging your shoulders, and go on. What did the tinder do?"

"Well, his Majesty stared as if he had seen the devil start up before him—I must say that."

"And then?"

"Why, of course despatched me to await the X. at her dressing-room door to ask for an explanation."

"A pleasant charge!"

"Very. During all my long years of service I never had another like it."

"It was flattering to your character as a diplomat."

"Flattery is at times very dearly bought."

"Is it? Well, I can't remember having ever paid so very high a price for any of mine; and I suppose I have had my fair share."

"Duchess, there never was flattery in your case."

"Now, Marquis, don't forget your gout, and go on with your story."

"I found Fifine in her mother's dressing-room, and was right glad of it. I was a favourite with the child, and she came as usual and climbed up upon my knee."

"Shall I show you my doll?" she asked.

"What doll, Fifine?" I responded, for my head was running at that moment upon quite other things than dolls.

" 'Why, the beautiful doll the King sent me last night. I'll get it for you in a moment.'

"She slid down from her seat, and brought me her treasure from behind the cushions of the sofa opposite.

" 'Isn't it lovely?' she said, holding up the toy, which was dressed in blue satin, and had a complexion that reminded me of yours, Duchess."

"Now, pray don't forget that gout of yours, Marquis."

"But I have never had gout in my tongue, and so ——"

"More's the pity, your enemies might say. Dear me, what a twitch of rheumatism! I'm *sure* that that window is not properly closed. No, don't look again; it's quite useless! Germain shall see to it—he'll be here directly with the tea."

"Then I had better finish."

"Oh, quite at your leisure."

"So I sat admiring the doll, and thinking all the while how I should begin my wretched task, when the X. entered. Suddenly I was called back to myself by the child's saying, 'Don't you think mamma was very, *very* naughty not to leave me the pretty brooch too?'

" 'What brooch, Fifine?' I cried, in such a tone as almost to frighten the child.

" 'Why, the brooch that was sticking here,' and she put her little rosy finger upon the doll's breast; 'a lovely blue brooch, all glittering like glass. I say the King sent it to *me* with dolly; but mamma says she is *sure* he sent it to *her*. Will you ask him?'

"Ah, you see I was right! The tinder did it, and the tow was beginning to smoulder, I suppose."

"I don't know; but the X. came in at this moment, and setting down the child, I rose. You may be sure I talked to her of anything except the bauble I had come about, and, after a few compliments, left the dressing-room and returned to the box."

"Yes, of course," said the Duchess, with a nod of approval.

"You may think how my arrival was looked for! 'And my brooch?' whispered the Queen. 'Well?' asked the King.

"I took his Majesty aside and told him all I knew—how the brooch had been found sticking in the doll's bosom—how Fifine had claimed it for her own—but how Fifine's mamma had evidently taken it as a delicate attention to herself. How the brooch got there was still a mystery.

"The King gave one of his hearty little laughs as I ended, and I knew by that that all his previous ill-humour had fled. He whispered something to the Queen, and nothing more was said upon the matter till we got back to the palace. There the mystery was quickly cleared up. The little Princess had taken the brooch from her Majesty's dressing-table to decorate her doll with—and in his hurry the King had not remarked the costly addition. That was the whole mystery."

"The whole *ostensible* mystery, at any rate."

"Duchess, you are tremendously severe to-night. I really do begin to believe the window there must be ill-closed."

"Never mind the window, now. How did the affair end?"

"Well, it *could* only end in one way. The X. was left in quiet possession of the brooch, and I daresay to this very day exhibits it as a token of royal admiration for her talent. The Queen received another from his Majesty, and the whole affair was hushed up as far as possible."

"And that was all?"

"Well, I believe Princess A. received a little lesson which effectually prevented her from ever laying her little fingers upon her mamma's dressing-table again. — Do you still feel a draught, Duchess?"

"No—I feel that I want my tea. There, the clock is striking—and here comes Germain with the tray."

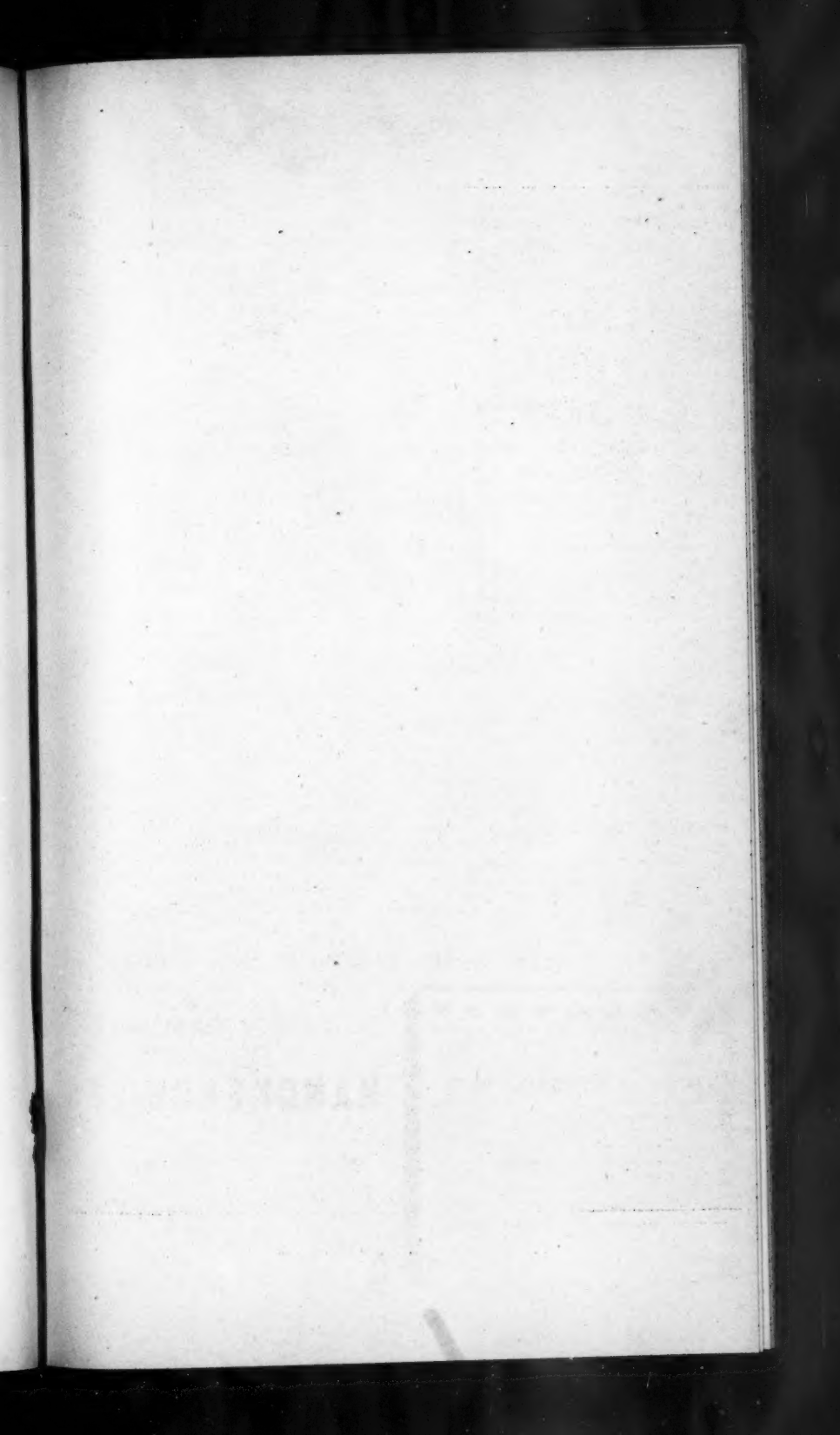


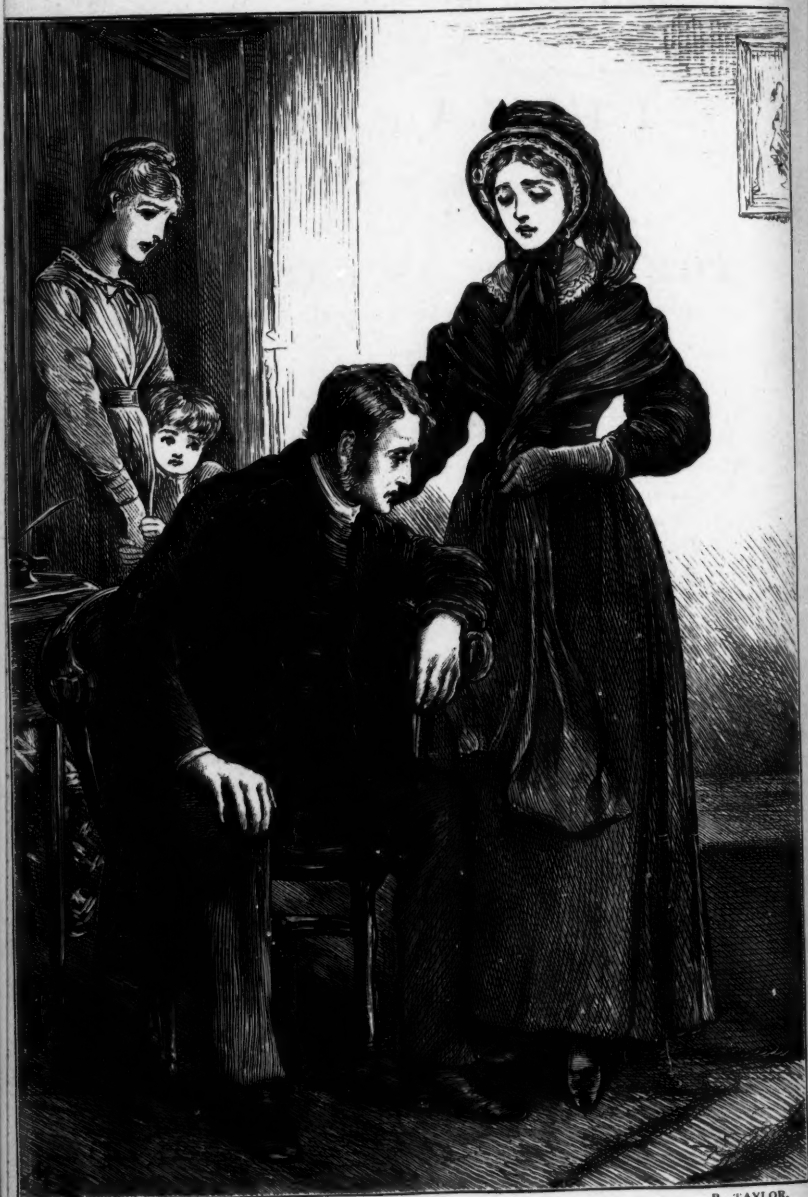
SOMEBODY'S DARLING.

SOFT bright eyes,
Of the sky's own blue,
A soul like a star
That twinkles through ;
A dear little face
With a dimpled chin,
A dear little heart,
Not hard to win ;
A tiny tongue,
That chatters all day ;
Tiny white hands
For ever at play—
Blithe as a fairy,
Small and as fleet,
True and tender,
Loving and sweet.

Locks like the sunshine
Crowning her head,
Cheeks of pale peach-bloom,
Lips rosy-red ;
Soft airs about her
Fresh as the Spring,
Ever new fancies
Fleet on the wing ;
Life in her laughter,
Love in her wiles,
Health in her gladness,
Heaven in her smiles—
Patiently gentle,
Playfully wild,
More than an angel,
Ever a child.

GEORGE COTTERELL.





M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"MUST IT GO ON WITH US FOR EVER?"